

arranged for Madame Albani, and were admirably adapted to her pure devotional style. This lady has acquired a very lasting popularity in the English musical world during the last few years; her conscientiousness as an artist, as well as her blameless domestic life, has gained her numerous friends and admirers from the highest to the lowest. For the last three autumns Lord Fife has lent her one of his Aberdeenshire houses, and while there she has been the recipient of many marks of favour and esteem from the Queen, frequently singing before her at Balmoral, and quite recently she was honoured by a personal visit from Her Majesty. One feels in writing of a Canadian to Canadians that these little details will not be uninteresting.

The Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts have again commenced at the St. James's Hall, and fully maintain their high prestige. For the last twenty-five years—thanks to the unceasing care and sound judgment of Mr. Arthur Chappell—these reunions have done very much to cultivate the taste for high class and classical music that is now so widely established in this country. A most favourable impression was made at the last Monday Pop. by a young English pianist, Miss Davies, a pupil of the renowned and esteemed Madame Schuman.

An election tale will, perhaps, be a suitable ending to my letter. An enthusiastic Primrose League lady, canvassing a sturdy tenant of her father's: "Of course, Stephen, you will vote the right way." "Well, Miss, I be going to vote the same as the Squire." "Oh, then, that's all right, and I may enter you in my book as a Conservative vote." "I don't say that, Miss; I say I be going to vote the same as Squire." "But that means Conservative, for you know father is one, and if you vote the same as he does you must vote as a Conservative." "No, Miss, t'ain't exactly that way; I votes the same as Squire, certainly: Squire he votes as he likes, and I means to follow him and vote as I likes."

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

WASHINGTON, December 12, 1885.

It was on the 8th of January, 1790, that President Washington, in rich attire and with great state, proceeded to the temporary legislative hall in New York to discharge, for the first time in our constitutional history, the duty laid upon the Executive, that "he shall, from time to time, give to the Congress information of the state of the Union and commend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." Conformably to English procedure, the two Houses were convened jointly to hear the Republican counterpart of a speech from the throne, and so closely was the chosen precedent followed that a short address to "Gentlemen of the House of Representatives" was introduced at the conventional place in the speech at large.

The exclusion of the President from any initiative in legislation has practically operated to deprive the recommendations of his annual address of much direct force, especially since the time when Jefferson converted the presidential speech into a written message; yet the public have somehow contrived to maintain a lively interest in "The Message," distinctively so-called, and the annals of the press afford many examples of early enterprise in catering to the popular appetite for it.

Circumstances both of a political and personal nature had united to create unusual expectation and desire in respect of the first annual message of President Cleveland, and not even the sudden and contemporaneous death of the greatest of millionaires could wholly displace it during the allotted two or three days that appertain to a modern incident. Let it be said, as by the way, that the large space momentarily occupied in the public mind by the late Mr. Vanderbilt is not so much to be attributed to a bare, unreasoning worship of millions of money as to hopes and fears engendered by the extent to which the social fabric of the United States is interwoven with speculation in stocks and shares.

But the message!—it were idle to mince words about it—it is inordinately long, and its importance is measurably obscured by platitudes and trivialities. Industry and patience are excellent things in their way, but discrimination and a due sense of proportion are indispensable to the composition of an effective state paper.

There are indications that the dull, dead level of mediocrity which characterizes so much of the paper is due to a generous desire on the part of the President to make a good showing for his Secretary of State, his chief rival for the Presidential nomination in 1884, and a man of eminently respectable character and attainments, who by usage is excluded from the function of making a report upon the operations of his department. But this does not help us to forget that certain of Mr. Cleveland's predecessors had to make the same liberal provision for such Secretaries of the Depart-

ment of State as Messrs. Webster, Marcy, Cass, and Seward, and were fortunate enough to discharge the obligation with more success.

The weak side of the constitutional arrangement which separates the President from the work of legislation is conspicuously shown in this first message of President Cleveland. For example, the state of the laws concerning agriculture, the public lands, trade with American countries, naturalization, copyright, the Mormons, the Chinese, the Indians, and offences against the revenue, are pronounced unsatisfactory; but the President has evidently not cast his thoughts into the form of amendatory statutes, and, as to some of the alleged defects, the critic naively confesses that he does not know the limits or effects of the existing laws. It must be evident that suggestions so crudely evolved can be of little aid to those charged with the responsibilities of legislation, and the Congress has perhaps been less censurable than appears on the surface in habitually ignoring the annual message these many years past, after paying it the formal compliment of referring its several topics to a multitude of committees.

On the vital question of the tariff Mr. Cleveland has performed the acrobatic feat esteemed of politicians everywhere, and known here by the euphonious name of "a straddle." There is a little buncombe about an old Argentine claim against the United States and the rights of Americans in the Caroline Islands; also an untenable contention of the right of Americans of obnoxious creeds to reside in Turkey—all of which may safely be set down to the credit of the Secretary of State. There is a shade of hypocrisy in expressing regret that Germany and Austria, in the supposed interest of home industry, continue to exclude American pork from their markets, the message failing to point out a distinction between prohibitory duties and absolute prohibition of importation upon any terms.

It is a pleasure to turn from the palpable defects of the message to its points of merit. First in interest to Canadians is the recommendation of a just, rational, and comprehensive settlement of the question of the Fisheries, coupled with an intimation that there can be no such settlement without recognition of the whole group of relations naturally resulting from the contiguity and intercourse of the two peoples. The silver coinage question is treated with courage, strength, and wisdom. Equally strong are the utterances respecting civil service reform, and peculiarly happy and quotable are the sentences that speak of "an immense army of claimants for office to lay siege to the patronage of Government, engrossing the time of public officers with their importunities, spreading abroad the contagion of their disappointment, and filling the air with the tumult of their discontent." This is a hit from the shoulder at the judges and colonels who swarm in and pollute the hotel lobbies at Washington, and Canadians will have no difficulty in fitting the cap upon the heads of some who haunt the public resorts at Ottawa.

The odious tax on sugar, levied for the benefit of a handful of planters in Louisiana, is condemned in language a little less direct than is desirable; but our public men are afraid to call a spade a spade when touching our cherished "ism," however remotely. Those who fear the consequences of our steady growth in population will find comfort in what President Cleveland has to say against entangling ourselves in foreign alliances and enterprises, and in his admission of the strictly international and neutral character of any form of transit across Central America.

The direct recommendation for the abolition of the barbarous duties levied on imported works of art will make the position of our art students abroad more tolerable. Canadians will appreciate the exception made in favour of neighbouring countries in the disclaimer expressed of reciprocity treaties.

The Indians come in for just and rational treatment, and the progress made in enlightening public sentiment and in improving the Indians themselves promises a final result of civilization and absorption, rather than the frontier remedy of extermination. The patriotic topic of a navy is considered from the defensive standpoint, the only rational position so long as our own laws exclude us from direct engagement in foreign commerce and navigation.

On the whole, then, and in spite of its prolixity and partial feebleness, the message is an acceptable and encouraging manifesto from a source to which we have grown accustomed to look for pure and manly conduct and speech. The peroration is a truly eloquent reminder of the claims of public spirit and public duty, and I venture to quote it in part, in the hope that it may find its way to other hearts than those of American Congressmen and in other days than our own:—"I commend to the wise care and thoughtful attention of Congress the needs, the welfare, and the aspirations of an intelligent and generous nation. To subordinate these to the narrow advantages of partisanship, or the accomplishment of selfish aims, is to violate the people's trust and betray the people's interests."

B.