

REFLECTIONS

AS was pointed out a fortnight ago, Toronto is greatly pleased because that city has become the headquarters of a transcontinental railway. This partly explains the success of the banquet to Messrs. Mackenzie and Mann on Friday evening last. The remainder of the explanation lies in the admiration which the general business-public feels for men who have succeeded in what they attempted. In no country is the number of superlatively successful men very large, consequently the few receive great homage.

With slender resources, in the face of great natural difficulties, and in spite of all opposition, these two men have succeeded in building or acquiring 4,000 miles of railway. Most of this is already paying more than the cost of operation and interest on the investment. Further, they have planned to build one or two thousand miles more, and intend to have eventually a road from ocean to ocean. To accomplish so much and still have courage to plan more, is certainly remarkable. Therefore, the enthusiastic reception which these two gentlemen received at the hands of three hundred members of the Toronto Board of Trade is made easy of understanding.

THE success of the banquet does not mean that Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Mann are above public criticism. At times, one or the other has been the subject of close scrutiny at the hands of a watchful press. Mr. Mackenzie is also president of the Toronto Railway Co. which operates the street-cars in that city, and he has not always been able to satisfy the citizens. There have been other criticisms more or less noteworthy. The builders of railways on a large scale are brought into close relations with governments. Governments imply politicians. Hence there is occasionally more or less talk. It was so with the Canadian Pacific. It was so with the Grand Trunk Pacific.

On the whole, however, Mackenzie and Mann seem to have conducted their affairs mainly on their own credit. They assert that not one acre of land has been granted to them by any government. Any land they secured they bought with charters previously granted. They claim also that the total subsidies they have received from all quarters amount to only five per cent. of their total expenditure. The great source of their capital was the British investor who bought all their bond issues. These facts were strongly set forth at the banquet, which afforded a splendid opportunity for such a statement. If one were inclined to be critical, one might say that some of the speakers took too much advantage of the opportunity, but after all that is a mere matter of taste. They were business men making statements to business men and what they said was economically valuable.

THERE is a strong resemblance between this banquet and that tendered to Sir Thomas Shaughnessy at Quebec last spring, when the first C.P.R. steamer arrived from Liverpool. It was a personal tribute to the head of a great corporation and a tribute to the corporation itself. It, too, was a supremely successful social event of economic importance. At a not very distant date, we may expect to see the City of Winnipeg tender a banquet to Mr. C. M. Hays when the first Grand Trunk Pacific train enters that city.

We all abuse the railways because they occasionally land our person or our freight at its destination a few hours late, or because they are collecting more for their services than seems needful, but at the same time we acknowledge that railways are necessary to national greatness. The men who are building our railways and thus extending the limits of our habitable area are performing a national service. The greater the difficulties these men encounter the greater should be our appreciation. Nevertheless, these railway magnates must not expect that our giving them banquets indicates that our criticism is at an end. The inalienable right of the Britisher is still inalienable.

IF the Peers were in the habit of adopting the epigrams of Commonsers, they might lay claim to having improved the Education Bill off the face of the earth. Word comes from London that the Campbell-Bannerman Government have decided to thresh over the Lords' amendments. It is im-

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possible to believe that the Government have been riding for

a fall. Such things are not heard of nowadays at Westminster—nor have they been, if Justin McCarthy is correct, since Gladstone's second Home Rule bill was thrown out by the hereditary House. Gladstone, the dean of British journalists, states, in his supplementary volume to the "History of Our Own Times," quite understood that the Lords would have neither part nor lot in granting an inch in the direction of Home Rule. After the bill had been defeated by them, says McCarthy, the Premier called a meeting of the Cabinet and announced that he would ask for a dissolution. His colleagues—or a majority of them—were not with him, and in a fit of dudgeon, Gladstone announced his resignation to the Queen. Then came Rosebery and his studied lack of interest in the Irish question.

The situation to-day in some respects is analogous to that which saw the retirement of Gladstone. In each case the House of Commons is almost fresh from the country. In each case the Peers had given ample notice of their intentions. But Gladstone, playing the game according to the rules which were in force when, for instance, D'Israeli "dished the Whigs," found that modern British politicians have no liking for crowding election upon election. Campbell-Bannerman is likely trusting to the moral advantage which his Government will secure with the Nonconformists. After that it will be his to placate in so far as possible the Church people, a majority of whose representatives support the Liberal Government in the House of Commons.

The chief accusation against the Lords is that they have amended the bill so as to make it more easy for the Church people to secure the giving of "extended" religious instruction in the Board schools—i.e., the public schools. Their Lordships' amendment in this respect provides that where two-thirds of the parents of the children in any of these schools petition for any particular form of denominational teaching, the local Board must consent. The Commons' bill made the consent permissive, thus imposing the responsibility on the local authorities. At this distance, and ignoring the religious class-feeling which unfortunately has been manifested, it seems rather curious that what may be termed an inverted referendum should come in for such fierce denunciation from the Government press. When