

of the House, there has not been selected some one better able than myself to begin a discussion of the important matters which are referred to in His Excellency's Speech. I am not unmindful, however, that to hon. gentlemen who have in the past performed the duty which to-day has fallen to me, there has been extended an unusual degree of kindness and consideration; and, Sir, having sat for one Session in this House, and having listened to so many hon. gentlemen delivering able addresses from your right and from your left, I the more keenly appreciate the difficulty of the task which I have undertaken, and the need I have to ask that the indulgence so often extended to new members of this House may not be withheld on the present occasion. Hon. gentlemen on both sides of the House will remember that, at the opening of last Session, the hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake)—whose absence to-day I regret on account of its cause—with that kindness and consideration which usually characterise him, was good enough to connect my name with the duties then so well performed by my hon. friend from West Huron (Mr. Porter). I must believe that only the hon. gentleman's absence to-day prevents him expressing the pleasure, which I am bound to suppose he would feel at my return to this House, and at my engaging to-day in the duty for which he selected me a year ago. Sir, I am well aware that to the members of this House, as well as to the people of all sections of this country, has come, with no considerable regret, the announcement that the gentleman who has administered the affairs of the country for the last four years is about to remove from our midst. Speaking where I do, I need not say that during his incumbency of his office, His Excellency has well performed the high duties that have devolved upon him, and that, whether in public or in private life, he has found a place warm and deep in the hearts of the Canadian people. Succeeding as he did a long list of illustrious Governors, His Excellency leaves us, having added one more brilliant name to the number of those eminent British statesmen who, throughout years, have performed great services for the Empire in this its western portion. In the still more important office to which the Imperial Government have, in their wisdom, called him, we can judge, from his eminent abilities and his long experience, that a noble career awaits him; and I think I can assure His Excellency that nowhere in the Empire will be found friends more anxious to applaud his winning of new honors and fresh laurels than among the people with whom he is soon to sever his connection. It will no doubt be urged, Sir, by hon. gentlemen who sit upon your left that the Speech from the Throne is barren in the mention of great matters, and that the legislation promised by the Government during this Session is not of the usual quantity or the usual quality; but, perhaps, the Government should be congratulated on the fact that the affairs of our country at the present time are so well ordered as to need very little interference from this Parliament. Some of the paragraphs of the Address, however, deal with matters with regard to which our information is explicit enough only to warrant a passing comment, while other paragraphs deal with subjects which may be more fittingly discussed in this Chamber during a later period of the Session. By reason of this, as well as by reason of my unwillingness to provoke a long discussion of these matters, I shall only detain the House a short time in dealing with a few matters mentioned in His Excellency's gracious Speech from the Throne. Sir, to gentlemen who have so recently been among their constituents will have occurred the desirability of certain changes in the Election, the Franchise, and the Controverted Election Acts, and, therefore, I need not anticipate what the proposed changes will be. With regard to the promised measures relating to the Civil Service Act, the application of English laws to Manitoba, the changes in the Judiciary Act, and the audit-

ing of the Public Accounts, I can only say that I suppose the necessity of those measures has been made manifest by the experience of the various Departments, and that they will be in the public interest. We are promised legislation with regard to the government of the North-West Territories. It will be remembered by this House that some time ago the Council of the North-West Territory was simply an advisory board appointed by the Government. At the present time that Council is partly elective and partly appointed, and I have no doubt the legislation which is promised this Session on that subject will be in the direction of extending to our fellow citizens in those Territories the rights of representative local government which we in the older Provinces enjoy. The fact that the Government feels warranted in bringing forward such legislation should be an evidence to us of the growing importance of those Territories, and the probability of their soon taking their places among the great Provinces of this Confederation. Then we are promised railway legislation. Hon. gentlemen will remember that some time ago Commissioners were appointed to take evidence with regard to the relations of the great railway corporations of this country to one another and to the general public. Those Commissioners have gleaned a large quantity of information on this very important matter, and the legislation which is to be laid before us this Session is, no doubt, the result of the representations made by that Commission to the Government. We are well aware, Sir, that evils have existed in connection with our railway system, evils which have become more apparent with the great extension of our railway interests, and which have injuriously affected the public interest, and I think the Government are to be commended for so speedily acting in the direction they have promised in the Speech from the Throne. At the opening of this House, last year, we were free to admit that the Province of Manitoba had suffered from a failure of its wheat crop, and that in consequence the people of that Province were not enjoying that measure of prosperity which we all wished they should enjoy. This year it gives me very great pleasure to be able to turn to my hon. friends representing Manitoba in this House, and congratulate them on the fact that this year their Province, though its soil is only as yet very partially tilled, is sending to the markets of the world 12,000,000 or 13,000,000 bushels of the best grain ever grown on American soil. Notwithstanding the very large amount of information which we have had from various sources with regard to our North-West Provinces and Territories, I think it will be admitted on every hand that we are only beginning to realise their immense wealth and value to this country. The enormous harvest which has been reaped in Manitoba during the past year, must surely convince us that we can form no adequate idea of the future possibilities of that Province—save this, Sir, that it gives us confidence that in a very short time it must become one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of our agricultural Provinces. And what shall I say of that vast territory lying between the Province of Manitoba and the Rocky Mountains? What can I say, Sir, except that we are only beginning to learn something of its immense richness? I understand that in the Upper House this Session a committee will be asked for to gather information with regard to the great Territories lying beyond the well-known fertile belt of the North-West—vast regions which are said to be capable of growing grain and rearing stock as extensively as the settled portions of the older Provinces. The only want I could find in that country, during a brief visit to it, was a want of population. It is true, standing here to-day we cannot say that our schemes for attracting immigration from older countries into this part of the American continent have been as successful as we would desire; we cannot say that we have secured as many of the immigrants coming to this continent as we could wish.