

REFLECTIONS

BY STAFF WRITERS.

THERE have been some disgraceful scenes in the House of Commons at Ottawa, and disgraceful scenes are likely to occur again. Where men of strong opinions, keen likes and dislikes, of opposing party affiliations meet, there is always the possibility of an outburst when blood grows hot. Nevertheless, that scene on February 19th is likely to hold the record for some time to come.

The outburst was not entirely unexpected. In the Canadian Courier of January 12th, a writer chronicled the report that Mr. Fowler had served notice on the Government that if he were troubled in the House about his land transactions, he would retaliate by disclosures concerning private acts of the Ministers. That writer was apparently well informed. Mr. Fowler was, it is equally apparent, waiting for an opportunity to throw his glove on the floor of the House. He threw it and it made quite a crack.

Throughout the whole of the present session, the slanderbund has been prominent in the corridors of Parliament and in the principal hotels of the Capital. All sorts of salacious stories have been whispered from ear to ear, and Ottawa, even Ottawa, was stirred with the exhilarating gossip. Satan finds plenty of mischief for idle hands, and there have been many idle hands and tongues in Ottawa this session. There are no large questions before the House, and the average member has a surplus of time and energy. Having little else to do, he has circulated stories about his fellow-member—on the other side—with a diligence which would have meant much for the country had it been constructively directed.

The situation is both lamentable and absurd. Scandal-mongering is not even good politics. Certainly the House of Commons is not the place for the airing of private scandals. The House should be concerned only with the public acts of its members and their relation to the national life and well-being. To turn Hansard into a Canadian edition of "Reynold's Weekly" would be to make Canada a laughing stock among the nations. There are other tribunals where the private lives of ministers and members are passed upon, and the decisions may safely be left to them.

Canada wants her members of Parliament to transact public business, not to spend their time looking through private key-holes. The eavesdropper, the scandal-monger and the self-constituted private detective may well be spared from our Legislative Halls.

THERE are many persons in favour of an Arbitration Act who are not anxious to see the present Bill rushed through the House of Commons. It is too important, too revolutionary a measure to be passed hurriedly. If it were deferred until another session, and if in the meantime copies of it were distributed among employers and employees, an opportunity for suggestion and modification would be given. After six months' discussion of the kind that such a Bill would be likely to receive, there would be an opportunity of passing it in a form likely to secure general support.

There are many employers of labour, some of whom have thousands of employees, who have not yet seen the

Bill. They may favour it and they may not. It would seem only proper and right that these gentlemen should have an opportunity of examining its details. They have considerable interests at stake and they would be keenly alive to discover how the proposed legislation would affect the relations between them and their work people. They are shrewd and experienced men who could give even a well-informed Minister of Labour advice which would be worth considering.

Then, again, the various unions ought to consider this Bill at their annual gatherings before it is passed, if there is a desire to make it satisfactory to them, otherwise the support which it should receive from these organisations may not be forthcoming. The annual Labour Congress should also have an opportunity for a discussion of its principles and provisions.

Mr. Lemieux has shown a laudable desire to preserve industrial harmony and peace, but he probably desires also to be fair to both labour and capital. The subject is one in which there is room for differences of opinion and which is beset by numerous pitfalls. Only by careful study and enquiry will it be possible to secure a law which will be assured of the general support of those who work for wages and those who supply the capital and the directing force.

THE view-point in Temperance and Liquor Regulation circles is altering materially—in Ontario at least. The battle-cries have all been changed. "Provincial Prohibition" has been displaced by "Local Option," due to the realisation that the former is practically and politically impossible. In the cities, the cry "Make Them Keep Hotel" is now being superseded by "Separate the Bar from the Hotel and Revive Saloon Licenses." The cry concerning the license fee is still the same: "Raise the Fee," but the temperance people find that the figure which they formerly considered the limit is only about one-quarter what the traffic will stand.

During the past week there has been an investigation in Toronto as to the administration of the license law and some interesting information has come out. It has developed that the limitation of the number of licenses has increased the value of those that are left to an enormous degree. Licenses that were worth only \$5,000 a few years ago are now being sold at \$25,000 or even more.

Mr. W. K. McNaught, M.P.P., an ex-commissioner, advocates that all licenses should be priced, in case of sale, at three times the annual license fee. If a license cost \$1,200 a year, the transfer price would thus be \$3,600, one-third going to the owner, one-third to the city and one-third to the provincial government. Mr. McNaught's reason for keeping the license price low is to prevent small men appealing to brewers for financial assistance. Mr. Millichamp, a commissioner, is favourable to a policy along these lines, but going even farther. He declared his belief that at least one license in the city was worth \$150,000. Of the 146 hotels in the city, probably only 46 cater to the travelling public. He favoured both saloon and hotel licenses.

The Ontario Branch of the Dominion Alliance met