

LIEUT.-COL. HON. JOSEPH ALDRIC
OUMET, LL.B., Q.C., P.C., M.P.

Montreal, Que.

LIEUT.-COL. HON. JOSEPH ALDRIC OUMET, LL.B., Q.C., P.C., M.P., Minister of Public Works for the Dominion of Canada, is a member of one of the oldest and best-known families of the district of Montreal. His father was Michel Ouimet, a Justice of the Peace, and a man well known in the Montreal district. Joseph Aldric Ouimet was born in St. Rose, Laval county, Quebec, on the 20th of May, 1848. He began his education in the Seminary of St. Therese de Blainville, but took his degree of LL.B. in Victoria College, Cobourg, Ont., in 1869. Like many others of the ambitious and able young men of his Province who have the desire to enter public life, Mr. Ouimet devoted himself to the profession of the law. He studied in the office of Edmund Barnard, one of the ablest practitioners of his time, and was called to the bar of Lower Canada in 1870. Starting with the advantages of wealth and social position, his natural talents were given an early opportunity to display themselves. A bright future was predicted for him by his many friends, and, though still a young man, he has accomplished more than enough to justify the most sanguine of their forecasts. He won a prominent place in his profession, and after only ten years of practice, on the 11th of October, 1880, he was given the honourable rank of Queen's Counsel. In 1874, he was appointed to a place on the Board of Roman Catholic School Commissioners for Montreal. Though called upon since to fill many places which brought him far more prominently before the public, he has never lost interest in the great cause of education. He served the people with fidelity and ability, and won completely the confidence of all. Another phase of public affairs to which he gave attention was the military. At an early age he joined the 65th battalion, Mount Royal Rifles, composed mainly of French Canadians, like himself. He was promoted to a captaincy and subsequently worked his way to the first place in the corps, being appointed Lieutenant-Colonel. When the rebellion in the North-West broke out and with it broke out murmurings in English-speaking Canada, that the French Canadians sympathized with the rebels, Lieut.-Col. Ouimet did more than a thousand impassioned speeches could have done to set public feeling at rest, by offering the services of himself and his men for duty at the front. The offer was accepted, and the 65th was one of the battalions to make the fearful tour of the North Shore, and to brave the perils and trials of the whole campaign. Their presence in the Edmonton district, and the active exertions of

their Lieutenant-Colonel, had much to do with keeping the half-breeds of that district loyal to the Government, and thus of preventing the calamity of a general Indian outbreak. In many ways Lieut.-Col. Ouimet has done much to improve the condition of the volunteer service. He has always been an ardent supporter of the movement to raise the standard of rifle-shooting among the troops. He is a prominent member of the Dominion Rifle Association, and has been chairman of the council of that organization for some years. Mr. Ouimet entered Parliament in 1873. He had the advantage of having a county ready to receive him as its representative, instead of being obliged to fight his way to the front, as a man of less influential family connexion would have had to do. The people of Laval county were proud of the brilliant young lawyer who had grown up in their midst, and when Hon. Joseph Hyacinthe Bellerose, who had been the representative of the county for some years, left the Commons to take a seat in the Senate, Mr. Ouimet was called to take the vacant place in the Commons. He has remained the representative of Laval ever since, and has steadily advanced in the opinion of his fellow members and of the people, and has achieved places of greater and greater distinction. He was re-elected by acclamation in 1874, 1878, and 1882, and by large majorities in 1887 and 1891. When first nominated he announced himself squarely as a Liberal-Conservative, and an independent supporter of Sir John Macdonald. He maintained that attitude until the lamented death of his great leader in June, 1891. He was cordially in favour of his party's policy on fiscal questions, on the Canadian Pacific Railway, and on other subjects as a rule. He was a declared supporter of provincial autonomy, however, and nothing could move him to act against what he conceived to be the rights of his native province. On the subject of Canada's right to make her own commercial treaties also, which was brought forward by the Liberal Opposition in 1882, he voted squarely against the Government and against the majority of his fellow-Conservatives. After the fiercely fought election of 1887, in which the bitterness of partizanship had been intensified by the rancors arising out of the Riel affair, Mr. Ouimet was nominated for Speaker of the House of Commons. The leader of the Opposition, Hon. Edward Blake, in his speech on the subject, though making a reference to the sympathy with the people of the North-West, shown by Mr. Ouimet, acknowledged that gentleman's qualifications for the eminent position to which his friends proposed to raise him. The choice of Speaker was unanimously made. Hon. Mr. Ouimet was conspicuously successful in presiding over the debates of Her Majesty's faithful Commons. His unflinching good temper,