

orator he does not pretend to be. His appeal was not to the sympathies or the passions. It was the reason of his hearers he addressed. The power of his argument bore down all before it. There was in his speech, moreover, the special note of distinction which marks all his public utterances; for now, as then, whenever he speaks, he lifts politics from a lower to a higher level.

When he made his speech in the great Riel debate, Sir John Thompson was in his forty-second year. He was born in Halifax, November 10th, 1844. His father, John Sparrow Thompson, who had come to Nova-Scotia from Waterford, Ireland, his native place, and was for a time Queen's Printer, and, afterwards, Superintendent of the Money Order system of the province, had him educated in the public schools of Halifax, and the Free Church Academy. His early training fashioned him well for ways of patient, faithful intellectual endeavour, and we may well suppose that Sir John Thompson owes in no small measure to those youthful years, devoted to study under his father's care, the habits of mind which have gone to determine the course of his life. No one who has often heard him speak can fail to be impressed by the conviction that he devotes himself with unrelenting energy to the mastering of all the facts having to do with any question with which he has to deal, and that he seeks to divest himself wholly of all possible prepossessions before making a judgment. He has shown that he has courage, though it is not the courage to overcome his convictions; and this courage must have been strengthened in him by his early training.

Of his skill in debate the young man gave early indications in the debating clubs of Halifax, where he gained a reputation as one before whom greater triumphs lay when he should seek distinction in wider fields. In 1859, he was articled as a student-at-law in the office of Mr. Henry Pryor, who was, afterwards, stipendiary magistrate in Halifax. He had already made himself a skilled stenographer, and he now turned his skill to account in reporting the debates in the Nova-Scotia House of Assembly. In the official reports of the debates of that Legislature for the year 1867, which the curious may find for the seeking on the shelves of the Library of Parliament, Mr. John George Bourinot, now the learned Clerk of the House of Commons, who was the official reporter, makes acknowledgment in his preface of the assistance of Mr. John S. D. Thompson. In the fol-