

British arbitrator, formed the very highest opinion of Sir John's ability, and expressed the "great value his presence on the commission had been in the consideration of difficult questions that arose, both legal and international, which were mixed up with the subjects at issue." Charles Russell, one of the solicitors for the British Government, "was struck with his wonderful judicial calmness. He very seldom spoke, in this respect differing from the United States arbitrators especially, but when he did speak, it was always to the point, and his remarks always invariably settled the point then under consideration. He was kindness and urbanity itself. I feel that in his death the British Empire has lost a worthy son, a great man." Hon. Wilfred Laurier: "He was my hated political rival, but my warmest friend. He was one of the ablest of Canada's sons, a man of profound convictions, of great valour, and of many brilliant parts. Eminently patriotic, his mind equalled his heart, and his mind was broad. He cared nothing for the approval of the populace; he felt only the satisfaction of duty accomplished. Could I do otherwise than admire such a man, the finest ornament of Canada?"

It is said that Sir John Thompson's favourite character in British history was Sir Thomas More, and in reading the biography of that plain, unselfish, high-minded man, there are many points of resemblance. Sir Thomas was "a Catholic by religion, who, taking the position in the world to which God had called him, had worked out for himself, by his own energy and talents, a career that would satisfy the most ambitious. He rose from a simple citizen to a high subject, and by steady application to the duties of his office had earned for himself a distinguished reputation. His life was marked by an ardent devotion to his family. He was a thorough Catholic and it was his customary habit before undertaking any matter of importance, to confess." There is an epitome of Sir John's life. "With great ability he united modesty; with exalted position, rectitude."

We wonder at his phenomenal success. But why? Remember the words of Holy Writ: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all things else shall be

added unto you." Religion to him was something real and vital. It was the guiding force of his daily life. He was essentially a man of prayer, and amid the distractions of his high office, he never forgot his religious duties. It is well here to point out the genuine and sincere catholicity of the man, and for that reason we shall divert from the trend of our remarks to relate some of the incidents in connection with the religious side of his life, which are deserving of remembrance.

He became a convert to Catholicism in 1871, at the age of twenty-seven. That he made the change deliberately and under circumstances not dissimilar to Newman and Manning, we know; for his intimate friends relate that he was debating the matter for years before the final step was taken. The same deliberate weighing of argument that characterized his whole life, he employed at that critical period. Of the sincerity of that conversion, the practice of his adopted religion amply proves. Indeed, he remarked himself: "I have everything to lose from a worldly standpoint by the step I am about to take. But never mind, I know stenography, and can scratch a living for my family, even though it be a poor one."

We have said he was a man of prayer, and as an evidence of his simple, abiding faith, a faith as pure and positive as that of the saintly peasants of Ireland, we shall quote his own words. It is in connection with his first and memorable speech in defence of the government on the execution of Riel. "I would have given all I possessed if I could have told a child at school in Halifax to do a certain thing for me that night. I moved the adjournment of the debate, and, to write, I knew my letter could not reach Halifax in time, and to telegraph would never do. The child was my son, and what I wished him to do for me at that most critical period of my life, was to go to confession on Saturday and to receive Communion with the intention that I might acquit myself in a manner worthy of the important task, and with credit to myself as a Catholic. Shortly before I rose to speak I received a letter from that child, saying that he had read in the Halifax papers that Mr. Blake was to speak on Friday and that I was to