

THE PREMIER DEAD.

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"Nothing could have exceeded the enthusiasm aroused upon the arrival of our fellow-colonists, and the Earl of Jersey as representing Her Majesty's Government. It was felt by our people that in Australia, New Zealand and in Cape Colony, millions of our fellow colonists were as interested as we were in the development of the empire and the mutual trade of the colonies with each other which development has been all these years without the slightest touch of our approach to kinship. One of the great objects of the conference, apart from the question of trade and trade arrangements was to avail ourselves of the opportunities presented by rapid communication, and to lessen the distance and time separating us from each other. Already, as you know, tenders have been called for by the Canadian Government for laying the Pacific cable, and it is a gratifying fact that these tenders place the cost of the work within a million dollars less than the estimate previously formed. We can judge by that fact of the possibilities of good results attending the conference. The carrying out of the undertaking must in a great part depend upon the action of Her Majesty's Government, as the project is too great for any one colony to materially aid it. But, when I mention the fact that Canada stands ready to support it by a liberal subsidy, and that, I believe, the Australian colonies stand in the same position, and seeing, also that the cost has been already lessened by a million dollars you will realize how completely within our grasp that undertaking is at the present time. (Cheers.)

"Another undertaking was the establishment of a British line of steam communication between North America and Great Britain. Within a few weeks after the conference a vote was carried in the Canadian Parliament by which £150,000 a year were pledged for the services and the feeling of the Canadian people has been so thoroughly aroused from one end of the Dominion to the other that although in parts it needs the assisting hand of Her Majesty's Government, the accomplishment of that object is as certain as any on the programme that has been laid down, and it is also completely within our grasp. The establishment of that service is a thing assured, and a thing assured within a very short time. (Cheers.) These are the results which have followed the assembling of the Conference so far.

The possibilities with regard to trade with all these colonies, at the Cape of Good Hope and in Australia and New Zealand are very great. I have not the opportunity or strength to deal fully with them this evening, but in common with Lord Brassey, I venture to hope that the influence of this meeting and the influence of all who sympathize with our projects will be liberally extended to us and that the feeling may be increased here as it exists in the most distant portions of the empire, that the day may come not only when the colonies should be united more closely together, but when they should have a more practically useful connection with the heart of the Empire itself." (Loud cheers.)

When the representative of the Associated Press saw Sir John after the meeting he looked very unwell and appeared to be experiencing difficulty in breathing. But in a kindly manner, he said: "I wish I could oblige you with my views upon the copyright question, the importation of Canadian cattle into England and other subjects affecting my country. But, until the conference with the Marquis of Ripon, (the Colonial Secretary) is closed you will understand that my lips are sealed. Come and see me on Thursday and I may then be able to talk."

HIS LIFE.

A Sketch of His Life—A Very Successful Career.

No other man out of all that have set their names high in the roll of Canadian public men ever made his way to the front in so few years after his entry into the field of Dominion politics as Sir John Thompson.

When he was called to Ottawa by Sir John Macdonald, towards the end of the year 1885, and made Minister of Justice and Attorney-General for the Dominion,

he was all but unknown outside of his own Province. Whatever reputation he had won did not go far beyond the bounds of Nova Scotia.

The ordeal he had to face in making his first notable speech in the House of Commons might well have dismayed a less courageous man. It was during the memorable debate on the resolution introduced by Mr. Landry of Montmagny, declaring the deep regret of Parliament that the sentence of death passed upon Louis Riel, the leader of the revolt in the Northwest, who had been convicted of high treason, was allowed to be carried into execution. The debate had lasted more than a week, and the mover of the resolution had been followed by Sir Hector Langevin, Lieut.-Col. Amyot, Mr. Royal, Mr. Gignault, Mr. Clarke Wallace, Mr. Cameron of Huron, Mr. J. J. Curran, Mr. Coursol, Mr. Wood of Brockville, Mr. Charles Langelier of Montmagny, Mr. Rykert, Mr. Bechard, Mr. Laurier, Sir Adolphe Caron, Mr. Desjardins of Hochelaga, Mr. Landry of Kent, New Brunswick, Mr. Gray, Mr. MacIntosh and Mr. Edward Blake, the last of whom had spoken during the afternoon and evening of Friday, March 19th, 1886. It was past midnight when the leader of the Opposition brought his powerful and eloquent denunciation of the Government to a close, and the new Minister of Justice moved the adjournment of the debate. On the afternoon of the following Monday the galleries around the chamber of the House of Commons were crowded, and the most intense expectation awaited the taking up of the debate. When the new Minister of Justice arose, he had before him the task of justifying the Government in having allowed the execution of Riel. In the debate on the Speech from the Throne not many days before Mr. Blake had remarked that Mr. Thompson—he had not yet received the honor of his present title—had "entered Federal politics, as the French would say, by the great Gate," and that "for him there had been no apprenticeship in Parliament." In what manner the Minister of Justice acquitted himself on that day needs not to be recounted here.

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.

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 Prior, 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 1866, 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 following year the preface to the official debates has the signature of Mr. Thompson, who had succeeded to the place of reporter-in-chief. During the four following sessions he continued to report the debates. These years of service on the floor of the Legislative Chamber of his native Province were of advantage to him in giving him a thorough and ready knowledge of the procedure of Parliament and a complete acquaintance with the politics and political leaders of the time, which stood him in excellent stead when he himself became a member of the House of Assembly.

He was called to the Bar in July, 1865, in his twenty-first year. Five years later he married Miss Annie Affleck, the daughter of Captain Affleck, of Halifax. A year later he became a convert to the Roman Catholic Church. In the practice of his profession he was notably successful from the beginning, and before many years he held the place of acknowledged leader of the Halifax Bar.

In December, 1877, after having served as an alderman and as chairman of the Board of School Commissioners in Halifax during several previous years, he was

elected at a bye-election to represent Antigonish in the Provincial House of Assembly. He brought a great accession of debating strength to the Opposition, and when the Liberal Government was overthrown in the general election of the following year—in which he stood again for Antigonish, and was re-elected by acclamation,—the portfolio of Attorney-General went to him as a matter of course in the new Government of which Mr. Simon H. Holmes was leader. It was known as the Holmes-Thompson Government. On the eve of the next Provincial election he was left at its head by the retirement of Mr. Holmes, who had held the portfolio of Provincial Secretary. The Government went before the people to stand or fall by the judgment to be passed by the Province upon Mr. Thompson's Municipal Corporations Act, which incorporated each county in the Province and provided for local municipal self-government, instead of the old system of government by sessions of the Peace and by the grand jury, vesting the power of expenditure of the road and bridge moneys in the municipal councils, and making extensive reforms in the method of disbursing such public grants.

After a hotly contested campaign the Government was defeated at the polls in July, 1881, by a majority of five members. Mr. Thompson was himself again returned for Antigonish. A Liberal Government came in, and a month or two later he was, to the great acceptance of the Bar of the Province, appointed a judge of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. When he went out of the House of Assembly he was in his thirty-eighth year.

His father was a friend and associate of Joseph Howe, and thus, though his strongest predilections have always been for the study and administration of law, there is something to be said on the score of heredity for his having become a politician. When he accepted, however, the office of Judge of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, in the summer of 1882, it was said of him that he fulfilled then what has been his chief ambition since he was a young man. More than that, he restored strength to a tribunal which had been losing somewhat of its old prestige. It is said by a friend of Sir John Thompson, that when he was made a judge of the Supreme Court, he formed a resolution to which he adhered faithfully while he was on the Bench, not to allow any day to pass without at least five hours' study of law. These three years of quiet, continuous thought and study we may well believe were more to his desire than the preceding years which had been filled with the noise of politics. Among the permanent results of his work while he was on the bench is the Judicature Act, which became law in 1884. It was drafted by him, and it simplified greatly the practice of the courts. He also found time to deliver a course of lectures on "Evidence" in the Law School at Dalhousie.

The Minister of Justice owed his knighthood to the services which he rendered during the negotiation of the Chamberlain-Bayard Fishery Treaty, 1887. He, in company with Sir Charles Tupper, went to Washington as the legal adviser of the British Plenipotentiaries, and prepared for them their briefs. The voluminous reports he had previously prepared upon the various questions of an international character which had arisen in connection with the Atlantic fisheries had already received high commendation from Her Majesty's Government. In recognition of his valuable assistance on this occasion, Her Majesty conferred on him the Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, in August, 1888. It should be said also that he was appointed Queen's Counsel in May, 1879, and that he was called to the Bar of Ontario in 1890.

It is not needed that mention should be made in this place of the many statutes prepared by Sir John Thompson, which have become law under his supervision, to the great benefit of public and private interests. Every session as Minister of Justice he brought before Parliament a large volume of new legislation. His amendments to the banking law, and his constant revision of the criminal law, may be specially noted as a great public advantage.

When the Dominion Government needed him at Ottawa he loyally allowed his own inclinations to weigh less with him than necessities of former political friends. He resigned from the bench of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia on September 25, 1885, and was immediate-

ly afterwards appointed Minister of Justice of the Dominion. In a leading article in the Mail at the time of his appointment, when all Western Canada was curious about the new minister from the East, appeared the following passage regarding him: "Starting like nearly all young men of his time, as a follower of Howe in the anti-Confederation period, more from personal fondness perhaps than from a profound conviction, he gladly acquiesced in the acceptance by Howe, in 1867, of the 'better terms' which by the wise determination of Sir John Macdonald were made the sign and seal of Imperial as well as of Canadian politics. Since 1869 he has been a most faithful, high minded, unselfish and respected advocate of the policy of the great chief of the Liberal-Conservative party of Canada. As a lawyer his success has been remarkable. He has the faculty of initiative, and is really 'learned in the law.' As an orator his style is usually subdued but effective, and in due season on proper provocation he can exercise a power of declamation remarkable in one who is not effusive in manner. His gift of accomplished sarcasm has been the secret terror of a good many bumptious gentlemen. Every success he has won; and all the popularity he has preserved, and all the authority he has attained, are due in part to the fact that his high and unstained personal character has obtained for him a position which no one has ever attempted with any hope of success to assail."

He did not come to Ottawa without the experience which should qualify a man for high office. He had borne the heat and the burden of the vigorous labors of the press, of the Law Courts, of the political arena, of the Legislature and of the Bench. The story goes that when Sir John Macdonald entrusted his present portfolio to him, several Ministerial members of Parliament went down to Earncliffe to declare their dissatisfaction. The Premier, after listening to their complaints, made answer, with that oracular waggling of his head which those who know it will never forget: "Gentlemen, wait until six months have passed before you form your judgment of the new Minister of Justice. Come to me then, if you will, and tell me that I have made a mistake." When the six months were passed no voice was raised from the Ministerial ranks against the new Minister's ascendancy.

At the last general elections on March 5th, 1891, he was again returned to represent Antigonish in the House of Commons. The election campaign, which was destined to be the last of the many through which Sir John Macdonald led his forces to face the fortunes of political warfare at the polls, was contested stubbornly in all parts of the Dominion, and Sir John Thompson, who had come to be regarded as among the strongest in strategy of the old Field Marshal's generals, bore a distinguished share of its hardships and labors.

In 1891, upon Sir John Macdonald's death, he was chosen as leader of the House of Commons, and in the fall of 1892 he succeeded Sir John Abbott as Premier of Canada. He was sworn of the Imperial Privy Council immediately before his death.

The above sketch of Sir John's life is a liberal adaptation of the biography in Tache's Men of the day, by W. J. Healy.

Last Words in Parliament.

Sir John Thompson's last words in the House of Commons were delivered on the 21st of July. Immediately before announcing that the business of the session had been concluded, he rose and, seconded by Mr. Laurier, moved that "the House do concur in the address from the Senate to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen to tender to Her Majesty their cordial congratulations upon the birth of a son to His Royal Highness the Duke of York and Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York."

Last Address in Canada.

Sir John Thompson's last public address was made in Toronto on the 13th October last, the occasion being the unveiling of the monument to his predecessor in the premiership, Sir John Macdonald. After referring to the loyalty and patriotism of the man whose memory they were met to honor, he closed in a peroration that may well apply to his own case. Referring to the monument he said: "May it speak of one who was great because he loved Canada much,