

unsurpassed efficiency as a departmental officer. Possessed of an extremely bright and nimble intellect, he has also that unusual accompaniment of high talent, the capacity for unlimited "detail" and drudgery. Indeed his industry is so great that it is in itself a most valuable talent. There is nothing superficial about his qualities; all his attainments are solid. He is equally at home in drafting or in debating a parliamentary measure, and he can make an eloquent speech as easily as he can report one.

Gifted with such rare ability, why should not the most accomplished lieutenant of Sir John Macdonald succeed the veteran chieftain as leader of the Conservative party? There are two objections which might be urged against such a selection. In the first place, Sir John Thompson is a Roman Catholic, and on that ground his selection as leader would be unpopular with some people. But while his religious views would be regarded by a few fanatics in Ontario and some of the other provinces as a most serious objection to his elevation to the position of leader, it is not probable that the great mass of the Protestants of Canada would be influenced by it in the slightest degree. There are many indications that the Protestants of this Dominion, while insisting on being considered honest and sincere in their own religious opinions, are beginning to recognize the equal presumptive honesty and sincerity of those who differ from them and to manifest a broad and generous spirit towards their fellow-countrymen of the old Church who are true to the light God has given them. Moreover the leader of the Liberal party is himself an adherent of the same Church to which Sir John Thompson belongs, so that the prejudices of any fanatical element in Canada could be safely ignored.

That point disposed of, is there any reason at all why the selection of Sir John Thompson as leader of the Conservative party would not be a judicious one? There is just one other objection which has sometimes been urged with considerable plausibility when the name of Sir John Thompson has been mentioned as the coming leader. A political leader to be successful must possess the capacity for creating enthusiasm in the ranks of his own party and a warm personal allegiance among his own lieutenants. Does Sir John Thompson lack that essential quality? I cannot answer that question. He certainly does not possess that magnetic quality in the same degree as Sir John Macdonald; indeed what politician does? The old Premier is a perfect master of the art of managing men. He will listen with profound attention to the maiden effort of some young Conservative member of the House of Commons, and no matter how the young member may stammer in his speech and talk the flattest nonsense, the Premier is pretty certain to slip around at the conclusion of the speech, and, with a friendly slap on the back, congratulate his young friend on his "brilliant eloquence" and his "irresistible arguments." If a follower gets a little sore about some grievance Sir John A. Macdonald has a wonderful knack of soothing his soreness by means of a playful poke in the ribs, a funny story and an assurance not too definite that the grievance will receive every consideration from him. On the other hand, the Minister of Justice has a conspicuously cold and reserved manner. It is difficult to imagine him patting anyone on the back, and it is impossible to picture him poking anyone in the ribs! It has been stated that he hardly knows all the members on his own side of the House. This doubtless is due, not to any foolish affectation or pride, but to a reserved manner which is just as much a part of his natural disposition as his dignity or his courtesy. Those who know the Minister of Justice best claim that, although his manner seems cold, there could be no more kind-hearted, sincere, or steadfast friend. He is now in the prime of physical and intellectual vigour and has already shown that he possesses many of the qualities of an ideal statesman, and if, from constant association with his friend the Premier, he acquires some of that distinguished gentleman's capacity for keeping people in good humour, the Minister of Justice may eventually become a most successful political leader. While he has not the tremendous force of that political Titan, Sir Charles Tupper, or the massive and versatile intellectuality and comprehensiveness of the Hon. Edward Blake, yet he always brings to bear upon every portion of his political and departmental duties a steady sagacity and a consummate clearheadedness unequalled by any man in Canada. It is said, however, that he does not care for politics and if that statement be true he will never make a successful leader of his party. Emerson tells us that nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm, and it certainly is not necessary to be a profound philosopher to know that in the field of politics a leader, to be successful, must not only be enthusiastic himself but a cause of enthusiasm in others. According to recent statements in some Conservative newspapers it appears probable that Sir John Thompson may soon abandon politics and go to England as a member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. His talents, his indomitable industry and his magnificent practical training combine to make him eminently qualified for that high position, and it is no exaggerated estimate of his legal attainments to say that in discharging the duties of such an exalted position he will show himself the peer of any of his judicial brethren. His retirement from politics in his 47th year, to occupy a seat in the ablest judicial tribunal in the world, would be an appropriate conclusion to a political career unique in the swiftness of its success, its symmetry and serenity.

In 1870, when a young barrister, Sir John married Miss Annie E. Affleck, of Halifax. He has a large family.

His eldest son, John, now eighteen years of age, recently underwent, with brilliant success, the matriculation examination of the London University, and it is said intends to follow the profession in which his distinguished father has won the highest honours.

Halifax, N.S.

### IN THE NOR-EASTER.

NATURE'S a-shiver. Grim and stiff and gaunt  
As frozen sentry stands each sleet-smote tree;  
Chill cattle huddle under kindly lee;  
The woods are silent—hushed each chirp and chant  
In mournful union. Every pleasant haunt  
Of scent and gambol, where in past-time glee  
Sported and toiled the squirrel and the bee,  
Is stark and empty as the home of want.  
Under the ash-gray fences drifted snow  
Gleams like teeth shown in anger. Shreds of blue  
Patch the dun sky, and let the sun look through;  
While from the clouds of mist that roll below,  
Filling each pause the sonorous gusts between,  
The tumbling waters lift their voice unseen.

Kingston.

ANNIE ROTHWELL.

### THE RAMBLER.

AMONG curiosities of criticism—things I have a penchant for collecting—may come the following statement from an old number of the *Contemporary Review* which I unearthed the other day. Speaking of George Meredith, the unknown writer (simply unknown because the title-page of the number is gone and the page with author's name likewise) says: "He is the greatest wit this country has produced." . . . Mr. Stevenson calls "Rhoda Fleming" the strongest thing in literature since Shakespeare died. . . . "He is the greatest of all the wits, for he is greater than his wit." And so on.

Now, what is this but the opinion of one individual—whose opinion is not worth much! I think, myself, it amounts to rubbish. To proclaim Mr. Meredith as the greatest wit England has produced is not only to exclude Swift and Sheridan, but to exclude Shakespeare. If "Rhoda Fleming" be the strongest thing in literature since Shakespeare died, where must we place Carlyle, the Brownings, Byron at his best, George Eliot *et al*? Such remarks as these may do very well for Samoa but they are out of place in a prominent English periodical. However, they serve as specimens of floating criticism, most of which is, and always has been, hasty, partial and inaccurate. Many of us well may exclaim: save us from our friends!

I think that criticism is never wholly acquired, but that it has some of the elements of a gift. I have known well-read people, very well-informed people—hesitate when you ask them about a new writer or a recent book—hesitate—not from a real and Christian wish to say the truth—but from sheer incapacity to "place" the book or the author without collusion as the mind-readers say. Such have not the gift of critical insight, instantaneous flashing, intuitive. Certainly I do not mean to exalt unduly the glib reviewing style of talk—perfectly despicable and altogether intolerable, this latter. But without anticipating later and non-contemporaneous verdicts, people who read and think at all should and must have some opinions of their own. As to airing them—perhaps they are right in veiling them, at least from me, otherwise I might go home and write them into the "Rambler." The truth is that there are about as many genuine and trustworthy critics in a century as there are *prime donne*. Shall we allow four—five—three—how many? One of the best articles ever written on this subject was Professor Church's spirited defence of "Criticism as a Trade" in the *Nineteenth Century*—I think—about a year and a-half ago. A capital thing, by the way, from the *Saturday Review*'s point of view—not from the author's—is an article in a recent issue entitled "Homer, *Fin de Siècle*." It is in the genuine good old sledge-hammer style, and will provoke laughter at once. In fact, it is far funnier than any comic production of the week ending January 24. But that would be no new thing.

Of course, I went to the "Gondoliers." I was excessively sorry afterwards, for you can do wonders with the piano score at home, and I knew all the best things in it already by heart. However, I weakly went. When the curtain rose on the Stage Peasantry (*vide Jerome*) and the inanities of the music trickled forth from the throats of those conscientious supers, mingled with the tones of an upright piano, it dawned upon me that the performance was so faulty that it became far more mirth-provoking than Gilbert or Sullivan ever intended it should be. The best song was left entirely out. The most melodious and charming duet was left out. A detestable comic (?) song was introduced, also a couple of Italian selections. Altogether it was a travesty and I hope I shall never have to endure anything like it again. What in the world is wrong with American humour when such a horror as that despicable ditty, "Birdie," is preferred to the graceful satire of our only librettist? People flock to such a performance and come away disgusted, talking of the decadence of Gilbert and Sullivan and as very few attain to the possession of a score, who is to blame them for not knowing better? As it stands without interpolation the "Gondoliers" contains

much that is delightful, although inferior in originality to its predecessors. The parodies of the old Italian school scattered through both acts are exceedingly clever. There is another parody of an old English glee. There are two bewitching duets, one of which was sung upon the opening night and left out the rest of the week, presumably because it was over the heads of the audience. So after all we are simply working in a circle. The melancholy truth is that Gilbert and Sullivan require a cultured audience.

Mr. George Grossmith, once the chief ornament of the Savoy, has been presented by the Queen with a watch set in diamonds, surrounded by a garter, and bearing the motto—"Honi soit qui mal y pense." Mr. Gilbert, it is well known, has bound himself to supply the Lyric Theatre with a comic opera, to be written in collaboration, with Mr. Alfred Cellier, next September. No doubt, a new Savoy piece will be laid on the stocks, and, in the meantime, Sir Arthur can console himself with the vision of the Royal British Opera House and his latest successes in *Ivanhoe*. The theatre is a very handsome one, finished chiefly in terra cotta and supplied with all modern appliances. I do hope it is fire-proof and that its exits are adequate. Most of us know what a well the present Savoy is, especially to those seated in the upper gallery. Miss Macintyre, the principal Rebecca, is an exceedingly pretty, natural and gifted young English girl, devotedly attached to her art and possessed of a fresh powerful soprano. Her successes at the great provincial festivals first brought her into notoriety and since then she has been identified with only the best performances in London.

### CORRESPONDENCE.

#### A CORRECTION.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—In your issue of January 30th, "The Rambler," in referring to my letter *re* Homœopathy and Koch's lymph, seems to have been misled by some of my remarks. I did not state that "the practice of inoculating by lymph for certain diseases is well known to Homœopathic practitioners," because it is not, and never has been resorted to by Homœopaths. In speaking of our remedy *tuberculinum*, I meant of course that it was administered by the mouth.

"The Rambler's" remarks *re* inoculation, etc., are very *apropos*, and if concurred in by the profession and public generally it would be better for "the poor suffering humanity" of the future.

D. OGDEN JONES, M.D.

Toronto, Feb. 3,

#### THE KAISER ON EDUCATION.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—In commenting upon the addresses delivered by the German Emperor at the meetings of the School Congress, you state that you "find it difficult to understand whether the Emperor has any very clear ideas in regard to education proper, and whether he is bent on reform mainly for the sake of the people's well-being, or simply for the sake of improving the material of the army, which usually keeps so near his eye, that it shuts out the greater part of the great world beyond from his field of vision."

I have before me a German newspaper with the Kaiser's second speech. I submit to you a translation of a few extracts, which may, I hope, correct certain misapprehensions very generally current, as to the character and the aims of the young sovereign of Germany:—

"Gentlemen: We are in a period of transition, and about to enter upon a new century. My predecessors have always shown that, feeling the pulse of their time, they foresaw what was coming; and I think I have discerned whither the new mind and the waning century are tending, and I am resolved, as I was in taking up the problem of social reform, so also in moulding our young generation to trace the new paths in which we must needs walk; for unless we do this now, we shall have it forced upon us within twenty years." The Emperor then read to the meeting an extract from an article in the *Hannoverscher Courier* which, he said, "reflected his own thoughts." Here it is:—

"Whoever has realized the strong contrast between once and now must be penetrated with the conviction that our new State system is worth maintaining, and that it is a task worthy of a man's whole strength to take his share in its maintenance and its steady development, that the fullest liberty must be granted to the teacher in presenting the relations of the melancholy past must be freely conceded; but it must also be conceded that he alone is fit to be a teacher of our youth who stands truly, and from full conviction, on the ground of monarchy and the constitution. An adherent of radical Utopias can no more be used as an instructor than as a Government official. The teacher is, alike by his rights and his duties, an officer of the State. What he is further concerned with, a studious care for the formation of character and of independent thought and judgment, I shall not touch upon here. He who has arrived at a closer understanding as to the state and the conditions of its growth and progress will perceive the absurdity, the impracticableness and the danger of the theories of social democracy, and will recognize the duty of taking his stand manfully in the ranks of the