

THE LATE HONOURABLE R. R. DOBELL.

The sudden death of the Hon. R. R. Dobell, by accident, will cause great sorrow throughout a large section of the people of Canada. To Quebec it is a calamity that will have a far-reaching effect on the business prospects of that city. Mr. Dobell was typical of a class of men to whom Canada is and ever will be under heavy obligations. He was a native of Liverpool where he was engaged as clerk in a timber importing firm. At an early age he was sent out to Canada to promote the business of buying and shipping timber. His indomitable energy, enormous capacity for work, combined with good judgment as a buyer, and administrative capacity, led to his being given a share in the business, which was followed by the establishment of the firm, R. R. Dobell & Co., of Quebec and Liverpool. In this enterprise he was joined by Mr. Thos. Beckett. When on a voyage across the Atlantic he became attached to Miss Elizabeth Frances Macpherson, whom he married. The Dobell firm, like others in the timber trade, had its vicissitudes, as its subject to severe fluctuations in prices and credits. The strain under which some sank only braced Mr. Dobell to renewed enterprise. He succeeded in keeping his ship afloat amid disasters all around, and making a number of profitable voyages. He was quite remarkable for the rapidity of his decisions and actions. A shower of cables and telegrams from buyers, asking prices, from his agents seeking instructions as to shipping, or buying, from vessel owners as to freights, loading, etc., were answered by him when travelling as fast as they could be opened and written. In the course of an hour he would set business in motion, involving the invitation of large contracts and the employment of numbers of men. Mr. Dobell was a business dynamo, sending power and life into agents and connections wherever timber was purchaseable or saleable. Amid what some would consider a whirlwind of business, he was ever calm, genial, as ready for a joke as a contract, and, doubtless, kept up his exceptional vigour by so heartily enjoying relaxation. Mr. Dobell was an enthusiastic Canadian and Imperialist. He did Canada eminent service in London by declaring his optimistic views as to her resources and future. He believed in Canada and his great ambition was to be identified with her development. With every public institution in Quebec he was associated. For that city he worked as zealously as he did for his own interests. He had views about Quebec's future that his removal will make difficult to realize. As a member of the Laurier Administration, the Hon. R. R. Dobell was able to wield a power little known to the public. To his practical mind politics were subservient to business, and the best political principles were, in his judgment, those that helped forward the prosperity of the country, and developed the unity of the Empire. Generous in purse and charitable in judgment, excep-

tionally gifted with physical vigour and inexhaustible vitality, he was one of the most affectionate of men. Canada never adopted a son who gave her more loving, whole-hearted service than Richard R. Dobell.

MR. MARCONI'S ELECTRICAL RECEIVERS.

Mr. Marconi has explained how he proposes to overcome one difficulty in working his aerial, wireless telegraphy, which explanation has only added to the difficulty, so far as the great body of the public are interested. It is obvious, that when a wireless message is dispatched it is liable to be arrested in its course by any intervening electrical receiver of the system. Thus a message sent from one vessel on the Atlantic to another, or to the shore, might be intercepted by a vessel for which it was not intended, an incident which would not only render the message useless, but cause confusion and anxiety on board the vessel which received such a message.

Mr. Marconi explains that, the receivers will be *tuned*, as he calls it, so that a message will not affect any instrument other than the one for which it is meant. How this is to be done is not explained, but it is evidently analogous to a phenomenon in acoustics. Every string in a pianoforte when set in vibration elicits a certain amount of sound from every other wire in the case, when such wires are exactly in tune, or strung to a corresponding pitch, with the wire that is struck. These sympathetic sounds are known as "overtones," which in a good instrument that is kept in tune, add to the richness of the music by producing delicate harmonies at which the player does not aim, and over which the pianist has no control. This may be tested by striking one key of a piano and listening attentively, when the ear will become conscious of a subdued musical murmur quite distinct from the one key that has been struck. A curious illustration of this was for a long time a great mystery in a certain house. It was noticed, that when the piano was played a sort of echo of one note proceeded from a corner of the room. This was found to arise from a metal bracket vibrating in sympathy with and echoing a particular note. Mr. Marconi, as a musical amateur and student of science, is doubtless familiar with this remarkable phenomenon and by some process, not revealed, proposes to give each of his electrical receivers the same capacity of responding to messages in tune with it, as piano and harp strings have of vibrating in sympathy with the same note as they themselves emit when they are set in vibration.

How invaluable it would be for insurance agents to be able to discover the tone to which each person they canvas must sympathetically respond! That the above acoustic principle extends into a wider sphere is quite certain. "There are more things in Heaven and earth, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."