

THE WEEK.

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Current Topics.

A Merrie
Christmas

Among the beneficent uses of the Christmas season, not the least, perhaps, is the break it almost necessarily brings, for one day at least, in the absorbing devotion to business which is one of the least pleasing characteristics of the majority in our times. Anything which puts a stop for a day to the wearisome grind, compelling one to close the door of his office or workshop, and spend the day in the midst of his own family circle, or in the companionship of his most cherished friends and family relations, can hardly fail to bring a benediction with it. It interposes a much needed barrier to the dreary current of mercenary pursuits, causing it for the time being to broaden out into a lakelet, on which there is room for unselfish thoughts, and a genuine if transitory interest in the happiness of others. This may be true, to a certain extent, of other holidays interspersed throughout the year, but there is no other, we believe, that is so full of tender suggestion and fond reminiscence, and of old-time memories of a softening and elevating kind. Those who are "getting up in years" are to be pitied, indeed, for whom this day is not embalmed in still precious and well remembered emotions of childhood—for whom it brings back no delightful pictures of the family circle formed around the old-fashioned fireside, and of hallowed lessons learned at a mother's knee. Long live the custom of celebrating the glad Christmas Day. It is the day which is consecrated above all others to the genius of unselfishness, the day in which all but the most stolid and hopeless specimens of human kind make some growth in the grace of thinking and feeling and giving for others. It is, too, the day consecrated above all others to family re-unions, to the renewing of old-time friendships, to the recalling—in itself a melancholy delight—of those of whom one feels that it is vastly better "to have loved and lost" than never to have known them. It is also the day which, above all others, comes to us not only freighted with present joys, but redolent of the immortal hopes of which it is the harbinger. Have we been writing sentiment? We pity those who cannot find a time and place for sentiment at least once a year. None the less, we wish even them, as well as all our happier readers, "A Merry Christmas!"

Death of Sir John
Thompson.

This sad event, which we were able only to chronicle in the briefest terms last week, has evoked expressions of sorrow and sympathy from all parties, not only in the Dominion but in the Mother Country. Making due allowance for the generous impulse which prompts, in the presence of death, to forget the faults and recall the virtues of the dead, it has yet been made abundantly evident that the departed Premier stood very high in the estimation of political opponents, as well as of political friends, throughout the Dominion. Nay, as not unfrequently happens with men of noble character, his political opponents are found to have been, in some instances, his warm personal friends. For our own part, having followed pretty closely Sir John's public life since his entry into the Dominion Government, we deem it scarcely too much to say that from the date of such entrance, and more particularly from the time when he became, by the force of circumstances, the virtual, as afterwards the actual, leader of the Government, Canadian politics were raised to a higher plane. Though we have not always been able to approve of the stand which Sir John felt himself constrained to take in the debates touching the scandal investigations of the past few years, and have in a few cases felt bound to express our conviction that he had failed, in some measure, to rise above the exigencies or prejudices of party, we are glad to be able to join in the almost unanimous expression of respect for his genuine integrity of character, as well as in admiration of his great ability. No matter which party holds the reins of Government during the next decade, we believe that it will be a period comparatively free from corruption in public life, and that for the changed state of political and public feeling, which gives promise of such reform, a large share of the credit is due to the much-lamented statesman whose mortal remains are now being brought across the Atlantic in one of the swiftest war-ships of the Imperial navy.

In calling upon the Hon. Mackenzie
The New Premier. Bowell to undertake the task of forming a Government, His Excellency, the Governor-General, took the course which commends itself to the great majority of the Canadian people. In fact, under the circumstances, especially after the Hon. Frank Smith had advised that course, there was hardly any other constitutionally open to him, without doing violence to well-established precedents. Sufficient time has not been had, at the date of this writing, to enable one to form a judgment as to the success which Mr. Bowell is likely to meet with in the construction of a working cabinet. The probabilities are, however, quite in his favour. There seems no sufficient ground for any feeling of jealousy or rivalry, such as might complicate the business were there other members of the recent ministry more nearly on an equality with Mr. Bowell with regard to age and experience in the service. Mr. Bowell is said to propose remaining in the Upper House. This conclusion, though disappointing from the point of view of those who think that the Premier should personally lead his forces on the field of action as well as in the Council-chamber, is no doubt a wise one. There are younger men, among those who will no doubt be found in his Cabinet, who are better fitted for that ardu-