

The "University of Ottawa Review," Christmas number, is a very creditable production. It will well repay perusal from cover to cover. Apart from college matters proper, it contains a report of the reception of Hon. Edward Blake, M.P., and Mr. Devlin, M.P., with good pictures of both gentlemen and the addresses of the students with replies of the distinguished visitors. Hon. Mr. Justice Curran contributes a sketch on Sir John Thompson. The reminiscences are full of interest, and we take the liberty of reproducing them for the benefit of our readers. The memory of Sir John Thompson should be perpetuated, his noble character, his earnestness and, above all, his clean life should serve as a model for generations to come.

The sketch is as follows:

At sixty every man has become suspicious whatever may have been his early disposition. Beware of donors ferentis is his motto. Flattering words put him on his guard instantly. "What does he want?" flashes across his mind; instinctively he knows there is something to follow the application of the unction. These sapient remarks flow from the fact, that the writer was the recipient, a few days ago, of a letter in which the opening sentence informed him that he is an "honored alumnus," a "valued citizen." Then came the conviction, that a request of some kind, lay lurking in the tail end of the missive. Sure enough, the editor of the "Ottawa University Review" desired that a sketch should be sent of one of my well-known contemporaries at our "alma mater" in the days of long ago.

That seems simple enough, but, the gifted young editor of the "Review" could hardly have been conscious of the train of thought such a suggestion called forth.

In 1854 I entered the college, then the old building on Sussex street. Bytown had not blossomed forth into Ottawa, the capital of Canada. No massive buildings, parliamentary or departmental, crowned Major's Hill, as it was then called. For that matter there were, so to speak, no buildings of any kind outside of the Cathedral and the Convent of the Grey Sisters. There were a few stores of great pretensions and small dimensions. There was not a gas lamp in the city, now a fairy land of electric lights, and the pedestrian, who had to travel by night, carried his lantern with its tallow candle for illuminating purposes.

But, what has all this to do with the college and its inmates, of whom there were then about seventy-five? Not much perhaps, but the material change that has taken place since, serves to make the approach to sad changes more easy. The question is not, who were my contemporaries, but, where are they? Alas! No need of conjuring up the Church ritual on Ash Wednesday: "Memento homo quia tu es pulvis, etc." The contemporaries have joined the great majority, and with one or two exceptions occupy their narrow limits in the city of the dead.

My only class-mate now living in the Dominion is His Grace Archbishop Duhamel, Chancellor of our University. His career has been brilliant and fruitful; his prudence is proverbial; the position he has achieved is of such prominence, that his name has been, more than once, mentioned in connection with the red hat of a cardinal. In the full enjoyment of physical health, his mind matured and richly stored, his heart beating in unison with every noble undertaking, he has, may it please God, a long period of administration before him, and, some day, a master hand will, no doubt, fitly chronicle his great achievements for the glory of the Most High and the benefit of Church and State.

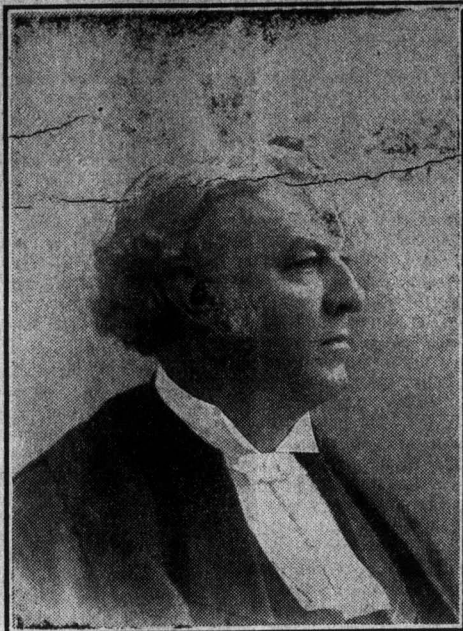
Looking over the list of graduates, there is one name that may, safely, be said, to be illustrious. He was a friend, my honored leader in Dominion politics; he was the fourth Prime Minister of Canada. His name shall never be forgotten so long as, in our country, virtue is prized and disinterested patriotism ensures remembrance. "The life and work of the Right Hon. Sir John Thompson" is the title of an excellent book written by Mr. J. Castall Hopkins in 1895. It contains nearly all that can be said about that great Canadian statesman, until his speeches and state papers have been collected, and the time shall have arrived when many documents, that must still be held under the seal of secrecy, may see the light. On the occasion of his state funeral at Halifax, His Grace Archbishop O'Brien preached the oration, giving an admirable summary of the dead chieftain's labors. It is a masterpiece of sacred eloquence, and, let us hope, that some day the distinguished prelate will permit that splendid effort to have its place in the pages of our "Review." For what could be more fitting, than that it should be in the mouth-piece

Reminiscences of Sir John Thompson.

of the University, of which Sir John Thompson was not only an honorary L.L. D., but in which, he was the first to fill the office of Dean of the Faculty of Law. It is not intended here to give a biographical sketch; time nor space would not permit it, but the request to write a few lines on some distinguished graduate offers a suitable occasion whilst reminding your readers, that the 12th of December is the eighth anniversary of the death of Sir John Thompson at Windsor Castle, to make a few observations that may be of use to young Catholic students who must soon face the stern realities of life. Lord Aberdeen, who will long be remembered as one of the most popular Governors of the Dominion, was a warm friend of Sir John. In the preface to Mr. Hopkin's work, which he kindly consented to write, he spoke of him as follows: "Sir John was a great man. He made his mark. His influence has been for good, and its impress is of an abiding nature. His country has reason to be thankful for him; and it may be confidently recorded, that his character and his abilities were such, as would have fitted him to occupy with success and distinction the very highest positions that can be attained by any statesman in the British Empire." And again: "In him were united gentleness and strength, marks of true manliness and nobility of character."

His gentleness, only those who had the privilege of coming into close contact with him, can form any idea of, but of his strength of character we have had so many evidences that it may be fairly estimated.

To fill the office of Premier of Canada, where a man is called upon, not only to guide the ship of state

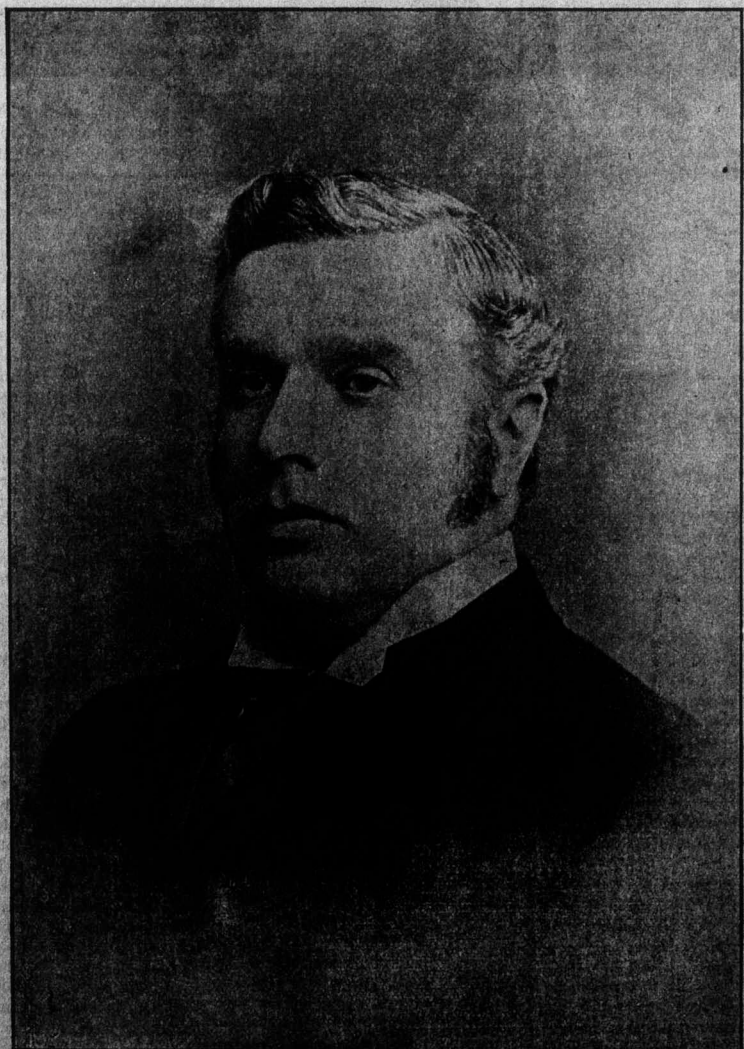


HON. MR. JUSTICE CURRAN.

patriae," was the only one who could carry the burden for any number of years. Hon. Alexander McKenzie, after a short period of office, was a broken down man — a mere shadow of his former self. Sir John Abbott, whose health was not good when he assumed office, had to re-

lax during the few years of his premiership, in the service of his country.

The work incumbent on such a position might well excuse the occupant from undertaking anything involving extra labor, and no mere politician would consent to be involved



RIGHT HON. SIR JOHN THOMPSON.

in its legislation; but to reconcile differences between provinces; to manage the susceptibilities of various races and creeds; to deal with the perplexing problems that crop up not only at home but with the mother country, and with our immediate neighbors, and, above all, to satisfy the clamorous demands of partisans — a much more difficult matter than to fight the enemy in the open, is one of the most trying positions in which any man can be placed.

Sir John A. Macdonald. — *passim*

in any outside cause when antagonism would be almost inevitable. Sir John was no mere politician. He was a statesman who despised subtleties of all kinds: one who felt that if he could do good by identifying himself with a movement, it was his duty to go forward. "Fear the Lord and do right," was his guiding maxim. We are not therefore surprised that, in addition, to his heavy labors he should have taken part in the organization of a branch of the Catholic Truth Society, in the

city of Ottawa. His was no perfunctory membership. He accepted the presidency of the association, delivered the inaugural address, and the few extracts given here will prove how fearless he was as a practical Catholic. He said: "Having completed our organization, our society presents itself to you this evening — its first appearance before the public, and it has been allotted to me to state to you the objects of our association, — its aims and its purposes." Then after stating "what our society is," what its parent association had already accomplished in England; that it had the blessing of our Holy Father the Pope, he said: "They aimed to accomplish their objects by attending to three subjects: Devotion, Instruction and Controversy. Having spoken on the first he said: 'The second object I have mentioned is instruction. There are, in all communities many Catholics who are quite satisfied to know, that they believe what the Catholic Church believes and teaches. The fact that all the Catholic Church believes and teaches is true is enough for them. But one of the objects of this society, blessed as I have said by the Holy Father, under the patronage of His Grace the Archbishop, is to impress upon Catholics that, in this age, they should do more. In order to the defence of the Catholic religion, in order to put its truths before those who do not understand them, it is necessary that Catholics should, not only believe what the Catholic Church believes, and teaches, but should be able to give a reason for what they believe. Everyone who has considered this question knows that the dogmas of our religion are set forth as clearly as the decisions of the legal tribunals of the country. The reasons on which they are founded can be as easily traced as the reasons for the decisions of a court of justice. When Catholics are acquainted with these reasons they are able to defend the truth whenever it is assailed. . . . We proceed upon the principle for which there is the highest authority, that the Catholic who is the best informed, in connection with his religion, is best grounded in the faith and most likely to be zealous in the practice of it.

"But even a more important point in connection with instruction is to place before those who are not Catholics, an accurate and simple statement of what Catholic belief is on the various points, in connection with which, there is much doubt and uncertainty in non-Catholic minds. What Protestants believe the Catholic Church to be is not the Catholic Church at all. What they generally dislike as Catholic belief is not Catholic belief. The great object of the Catholic Truth Society and its branches, and the object which this society endeavors to take up and promote, is to place before those who are not Catholics simple, inoffensive, plain statements of what Catholic belief really is. I must say that nothing has attracted me more, in connection with the operations of the parent Society in England, than the excellent taste and perfect charity in which their works are prepared. There is nothing in them to offend. They put in the minds of Catholic readers, just what the actual facts are, and they put before Protestants plain statements which often make an end of controversy. The field does not extend merely to points of Catholic dogma and points of history, it includes questions of science, in connection with which, there sometimes appears to be contradiction to Catholic belief. From time to time it is the duty of the society to watch the progress of public discussion, and whenever discussion is brought to bear upon any subject, which affects the Catholic religion, to see that Catholic truth is correctly stated and placed before the public eye. This is a most important mission."

"There is also the duty of attending to controversy. I hope that no one, who has been solicited to extend patronage to our society will be at all afraid, that we are going to put on the armor of war, and rush to the attack of our Protestant fellow-citizens. If we did so, we would be stepping beyond the bounds of the Catholic Truth Society. We engage in controversy only for the purpose of defence, and for the purpose of stating what our belief

is, and the grounds for our belief, when we find that our belief, or the grounds on which our belief rests, are attacked or misrepresented. A great deal has been done by such societies in the way of controversy, not for the purpose of attacking any man's belief, but for the purpose of putting plainly before those who differ from us, what we believe and why we believe it. That certainly can give offence to no man. While I say that the Catholic Truth Society inculcates upon its members great forbearance, let me not be understood to mean, that we apologize for that which we believe, or that which we practice. We avow and defend our faith, and the practice of it, knowing that what we are taught will bear criticism, and deserves defence."

Another remarkable instance of Sir John Thompson's force of character was manifested, in the dignified silence maintained by him, during the fierce attacks he was subjected to by the late Rev. Dr. Douglas, a leading Methodist divine, who would not forgive him for his change of religion. On the formation of the Thompson Government, Dr. Douglas poured forth the vials of his wrath. One day the writer of this little sketch, in speaking to Sir John Thompson remarked that his friends were pleased that he had made no reply to the invectives hurled against him. He then mentioned that a leading Methodist gentleman had written him a letter of sympathy, which he prized very much, and that in reply he had set forth in a few lines his answer to the attack made upon him. After Sir J. M.'s death, I wrote to this friend and obtained permission to make a few extracts from the letter, for the purpose of a lecture to be delivered at the Catholic Summer School near Flattsburg, N.Y. Unfortunately the extracts, which were copied in many parts of this continent, were in some instances mutilated.

The assailed and the assailant being now dead, as well as the gentleman who was the recipient of that letter, I feel at liberty to give as much of it here as has any public interest, as it so thoroughly reflects the character of the writer:

"My Dear —

"Words cannot express my appreciation of your great kindness in writing to me as you did about the extraordinary attack made on me by Dr. Douglas. The noble words of your relative, too, were a great comfort and made me realize how many there may be among the 800,000, for whom Dr. D. claims to speak, who have too much of the Christian spirit to follow his uncharitable judgment on one of whom he knows absolutely nothing. I have had many indications of the same kind from my own province where my life was spent until the last seven years and there no enemy, political or otherwise, ever breathed of me any one of the slanders which the Dr. has twice uttered in the West. One acquaintance writing from Halifax a few days ago, declares that in the Methodist Church where I worshipped when a youth, there are very many who have referred to these tirades, but that every one has condemned them, and that if I were to run an election in Halifax to-morrow, the great majority of the congregation would be at my back, as it always was. Every reference to detail in the Doctor's two addresses was absolutely false — the Bible Class was a myth. I never taught, but a class of poor children who were learning to read; as to the rapidity of my conversion — 'as sudden as the wildest Salvationist' — I had been attending C. of E. and R. C. services, exclusively, for upwards of four years and reading all of controversy I could get my hands on, and finally yielded only when to believe and not to profess appeared to be wretched cowardice. The 'occult reasons,' — what could they be? I did not know one R. C. prelate. I had very few Catholic clients — no influential Catholic friends. Not my marriage relations — I had made the acquaintance of my wife after I had resolved to make the change; but, I had been married a year before the change occurred, as I did not want it to appear as though I had 'turned' in order to be married. My wife brought me all the joys and blessings that have made my home happy for 23 years, but not one dollar of money. In fact I believed the day of my baptism was the day that closed my chances of professional advancement, or any other — I felt that I had but one resource left — my short-hand — which I knew I could support my wife and myself if matters came to the worst. But I felt that there was no use in putting all this before the public, in answer to Dr. Douglas, and that it was better to stand or fall by the certain right which I had to declare that these were not matters for public discussion, but matters of conscience only. If I had discussed them I must

have added that after years of experience, I would do as necessary, what I did it a thousand times at all the blessings which I have had, w misfortunes and a could not fail to off I felt, were willing to ter in a broad and or to lay it aside as not be debated. At would have been no trovery that would to the 'why and' "Permit me again thank you and to yours every grace and

Yours sincere

JNO. S. D.

The lesson of Sir son's life for young C of fearlessness in the His was a path strewn ies, but he never falt gentle as Lord Aberc he felt that as a Cat equal rights with his of other creeds. He h of his convictions, as when he stated at th in Toronto shortly a the Premiership; in p leading supporters, whom held different y from himself, "I w tion!" They could t was or leave him. Ho man; was genial and k as for his faith, he n ed it but practiced it thereby gave strengt temporaries and an e rising generation. made in the opening marks of the book o work, as well as to th funeral oration prom him. Many have extol career in verse as well, them one of our own low-countrymen, Mr. A of St. John, N.B., wh lines are as follows:—

The darkness came whi was high,
And dimmed forever th eye,
Whose vision pierced clouds of strife,
And marked in hono way of life.
No dreams of glory dw in aim,
To whom his country's more than fame;
No sheen of gold obscur er view.
Who saw the right, and ance true.
His life went out withi walls
Of ancient Windsor's an Where England's sons fo the foam
From flood and field their trophies home To lay at England's feet one,
The greater Britain's gr al son,
Whose eagle vision sweep sky,
Should pass the statel to die,
Fame's laurel wreaths a ashes now,
The seal of Death upon brow
Proclaims a more imp ighty
Than hers who holds the the sea
His country mourns — and fate unkind?
The onward look of th melled mind
Saw closer drawn the that hold
These kindred nations in fold,
Love kindles hearts by k row thrilled
— Was not his dream of li fulfilled?
When England's empres her breast,
With soothing words an maiden pressed,
And kissed the cheek that with hopeless tears.
Not all the statecraft of years,
With all its mastery of arts,
Could strike so deep a ch al hearts.
The solemn tolling of th bells
To all the world the tale tells;
The funeral pomp the pa State,
Declare that England m fallen great,
Across the wintry ocean breast
They bear his body to its And ocean's mistress train of war
To guard the passage of h car.
His own loved city eld sacred dust.