

SIR JOHN THOMPSON.

"Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
 (That last infirmity of noble souls)
 To scorn delights and live laborious days;
 But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
 And think to burst out into open blaze,
 Comes the blind fury with a'horred shears,
 And slits the thin spun life."

—MILTON.



UR thoughts revert to a calm night in June three years ago, when the city bells announced to anxious watchers the death of the father and founder of this fair Dominion,—Sir John Macdonald. And now amid the lengthening shadows of a closing year, it is the bell of Westminster Abbey that tolls the solemn knell. The echo is wafted o'er the lonely leagues of the barren Atlantic. The wandering sea-winds chant in piteous moan, and join the sad dirge of ocean's requiem, with sobbing wail. A blow, startling and tragic, has fallen upon Canada, draping it from Atlantic to Pacific, from Hudson's ice-bound coast to southern glades, in the gloomy trappings of woe.

"Where is he who hath mounted fame's ladder so high?
 From the round at the top he has stepped to the sky."

But the lesson of his life remains with us—a precious inheritance, beyond the power of death and time to diminish or destroy. It is but fitting that young Canadians should view with loving and enthusiastic admiration the career and personality of their great countryman, whom the whole British Empire has united to honour and lament.

Sir John Thompson was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the 10th of November, 1844. His father was a native of Waterford, Ireland, and after coming to America associated himself with the great Joseph Howe in journalism and in politics, holding at one time the office of Queen's Printer, and subsequently that of superintendent of the Money Order system of his adopted

Province. The late premier received only a common school education, and at the age of seventeen began the study of law, and was admitted to the bar in 1865. In 1870, he married Miss Annie Affleck of Halifax. In 1877 he was retained as Counsel for the United States Government before the Fishery Commission at Halifax, under the Treaty of Washington. Having been elected to the legislature in the same year, he became a member of the Government and Attorney-General in 1878, and in 1879 was created a Queen's Counsel. Upon the retirement of Mr. Holmes, he became Premier, a position which he occupied for only a few months, when his government was defeated at the general elections. Shortly afterwards he was appointed to the Bench of the Provincial Supreme Court, from which he descended in September 1885, at the earnest solicitation of Sir John Macdonald, to accept the portfolio of Minister of Justice in the Dominion Cabinet, and in the following month was elected to represent Antigonish county in the Parliament of Canada.

Thereafter, honours fell thick and fast upon him. In 1888, he was created a Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, for his distinguished services during the Chamberlain Bayard fishery negotiations at Washington. When the reins of power fell from the nerveless hands of Sir John Macdonald in June 1891, he was requested by Lord Stanley to form a government, but declined in favour of Sir John Abbott. The interregnum of the latter's administration was not an era of history; Sir John Thompson was the "deus ex-machina" of that government, and on the retire-