



### The Late Sir John Thompson.

The awfully sudden and unexpected death of Canada's First Minister has stirred the Christian world. The sad, and it may be said, premature demise of the Right Hon. Sir John Thompson is, in the press and in all social gatherings, the topic of universal dismay and regret. That he was ailing or afflicted with any serious illness that foreboded disaster, or threatened to cut short his all too precious and useful life, was apprehended only by a few of his most intimate friends and political associates. To the Canadian people whom he represented in the Imperial councils and to the world at large, the news of his unforeseen death has been a painful shock. Deep seated and universal is the feeling that a great light has gone out, and that a loss almost irreparable has fallen upon the nation that he was chosen to legislate for, and to whose interest and whose honor all his supereminent talents and all his generous impulses were entirely devoted. Short, indeed, was the Parliamentary career of the Prime Minister whose lamentable exit from this mundane sphere is to-day chronicled, but how successful and how full of glory it was, is evidenced by the sad regrets of all at his sudden departure. From the humblest commoner to the highest dignitary of State, from the most remotely situated colonist to the Lords of the realm and the Queen on her throne, come messages of sympathy and condolence as well to the bereaved widow and children who are left to mourn his fate as to the country that bewails his loss.

It is but eight short years since Hon. John Thompson first entered the House of Commons in Canada. He was selected by the late Sir John Macdonald as Minister of the Dominion Cabinet, and he assumed the responsible position and duties of Minister of Justice in February, 1886. Many wondered what manner of man this was who was singled out by the Conservative chieftain for so important a seat in the Cabinet. No doubt Sir John was known to have almost unerring judgment in his choice of men, but many wondered whether the new man would be really an accession of strength to the Ministry or not.

It fell to the lot of the Hon. Edward Blake, the leader of the Opposition, to welcome the new Minister to the House of Commons. Mr. Blake had little or no previous acquaintance with the Hon. John Thompson and as parliamentary critic he spoke rather ironically both of his new opponent and the responsible position he was selected to occupy.

"I congratulate," said Mr. Blake, "the Hon. incumbent of the office. He enters federal politics, as the French would say by the great gate: for him there is no apprenticeship in our Parliament. There is certainly a period during which he filled a provincial office (in Nova Scotia) creditably, and received certain other training to which I shall presently allude; but as far as federal politics are concerned he comes into Parliament as the incumbent of the important office of Minister of Justice without passing through any apprenticeship in this house. No greater compliment could be paid to a public man."

Mr. Blake lived to acknowledge the wisdom of the Premier's choice, and to pay just tribute to the moral worth, great capacity and legal supereminence of the man called to fill the new office. Three years later on, the same Mr. Blake crossed the floor of the House to congratulate the Minister of Justice on his memorable and magnificent speech just delivered in opposition to disallowance of the Jesuit Estates Act. In reply to Mr. D'Alton McCarthy Sir John Thompson gave utterance to one of the most scholarly and eloquent speeches ever heard in the Canadian House of Commons. He maintained that England in conquering the French arms on the plains of Abraham came into possession of all the fortifications, garrisons and supply stores of the French King, but no more. The King of England was powerless by the law of nations to lay his hand on property or land belonging to private individuals or to corporate bodies. Besides, the terms of capitulation were that all religious communities, the Jesuits among others, and all priests shall preserve their movables, the property and revenue of the Seignories, and other estates which they possessed in the colony. It was wrong therefore to say that the Jesuits were deprived of their property. The King of England had no such authority, the law of nations did not allow him to touch one rood of the land belonging to the Jesuits. When the last of the Fathers died in Quebec, the Jesuit Estates escheated to the Church and not to the King. The Catholic Church always claimed ownership of these Jesuit Estates because they were donated by the King of France for educational and religious pur-

poses; and when an attempt was made to sell those lands, no one could be found to purchase them because no satisfactory title could be given. It is objected that the Pope's name is mentioned in the preamble of the bill. In the history of disallowance, and in the history of the statutes in the mother church, I think the records will be searched in vain to find an act disallowed because the preamble was offensive to somebody. To the argument of Mr. D'Alton McCarthy that the Jesuits had been expelled from France, Sir John Thompson replied, that Protestants, or the Huguenots, as they were named had also been expelled from France, but that was no reason why justice should now be refused to either Protestants or Jesuits. The words of the orator were:

If I were to advise His Excellency to disallow the Act on the ground of the expulsion of the Huguenots, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the Franco-German war, the expulsion from France in 1818, the expulsion from other countries, I am afraid His Excellency might tell me that all the statements of facts were disputed, and that he might read me a lesson in ancient and modern history, of which one of the deductions could be that in some of these countries to say that the court was opposed to the Jesuits, or to say that the court was opposed to the Protestant reformers, was no discredit to either the Protestant reformers or to the Jesuits. I do not think, sir, that I need dwell upon that branch of the subject any longer. I think that whenever we touch these delicate and difficult questions which are in any way connected with the sentiments of religion, or of race, or of education, there are two principles which it is absolutely necessary to maintain, for the sake of the living together of the different members of this confederation, for the sake of the preservation of the federal power, for the sake of the good-will and kindly charity of all our people towards each other, and for the sake of the prospects of making a nation, as we can only do by living in harmony and ignoring those differences which used to be considered fundamental—these two principles surely must prevail, that as regards theological questions the state must have nothing to do with them, and that as regards the control which the federal power can exercise over provincial legislatures in matters touching the freedom of its people, the religion of its people, the appropriations of its people, or the sentiments of its people, no section of this country, whether it be the great province of Quebec, or the humblest and smallest province of this country, can be governed on the fashion of 800 years ago.

Sir John Thompson's greatness as a bright legal luminary, as a most eloquent and convincing debater and as an accomplished statesman and diplomatist, has been recognized and appreciated by all parties in his own country, and yet not so fully in Canada as in the bureaucratic circles of England and France.

Sir John Thompson's successful and ever honourable achievements in the political world however, were nowhere to be considered as on a parity with the gains he secured as an applicant for spiritual favours and redeeming grace in this life with a certain assurance of Eternal rest, happy rest, in that eternity which opened to his view on the afternoon of Wednesday the 12th inst. From the day of his conversion to the Catholic Faith until his last breath, evidences were never wanting of the perfect satisfaction and heartfelt joy he experienced at having found in religion balm and solace from a spirit troubled with many anxieties and that hopeful courage and trust in aid from on high that bore him up under every difficulty, and lent the cheerfulness of assured success to all his undertakings.

That Sir John Thompson was a fervent Catholic and a devout believer in all her dogmatic teachings it is impossible to entertain a shadow of doubt. His attendance at all church ceremonies in Ottawa, the interest he took in the Society of Catholic Truth, and every effort made to lessen prejudice and prepare the way for mutual forbearance and Christian Unity amongst all men, testified to his loving attachment for Mother church and to his broadminded charity that recognized no boundary or limit. Taken unawares and visited by the hand of death, as by a thief at midnight, yet he was not found like the foolish virgins with heart weaned off or lamps untrimmed. He breathed his last in the palace of his earthly sovereign surrounded by the gaieties and splendors of royal magnificence, but they found clasped to his heart the image of the Saviour who died to redeem him, and on his person the badges of loyal fidelity to the mother of Jesus—our life, our sweetness and our hope. His conduct through life was a pattern for all aspirants to secular fame and position—his practical faith and unobtrusive piety is a model for all seculars, for politicians and statesmen, who wish, while serving the world, to attend to the one thing necessary and make sure their salvation. *DMYRUS.*