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NOT exactly the unexpected, but that which seemed the less rather than the more probable, has happened. The Hon. J. J. C. Abbott has been entrusted by His Excellency the Governor-General with the task of forming a Cabinet. If, as is generally believed, this has been done at the instance of Sir John Thompson, the fact will but add to the already high reputation of the latter for self-restraint and sound judgment. It is, no doubt, an evidence of his desire to avoid, at a critical moment, the risk of stirring up either sectional or religious jealousies, however unreasonable and unworthy he may deem such jealousies. The first question that presents itself is that of the degree in which the new Premier combines in himself the qualities essential to success in the arduous work of leading the Government as the successor of Sir John Macdonald. That Mr. Abbott combines intellectual abilities of a high order, with the qualities scarcely less essential in the head of the Government, of good judgment and fine tact, is generally admitted. He has, moreover, the advantage of being able to enter upon his high office free from violent animosities either personal or political, so that there seems no reason to fear that he will be met with the determined and bitter hostility which the succession of Sir Charles Tupper, for instance, would have invoked. So far as we are aware, his reputation, both public and private, is stainless, with one unfortunate exception—that of his connection with the Pacific Railway Scandal. But as the Canadian people, or a large majority of them, have long since condoned that offence in the case of the principals in the affair, it is unlikely that they will care to remember it against one whose part in it was but subordinate, and to some extent, perhaps, professional. In brief, then, it may be said that positively Hon. Mr. Abbott possesses many of the qualifications which Canadians have a right to expect in the Premier of the Dominion—superior ability, experience in public and semi-public life, personal dignity, combined with a pleasing urbanity, social influence, sound discretion. That he has also great popularity in his own city and among the people who know him best was abundantly shown a few years since in the events con-

nected with his choice for two consecutive years as Mayor of Montreal. Indeed there seems good reason to hope that with Mr. Abbott as Premier and Leader of the Senate, and Sir John Thompson as virtual, if not nominal, Leader in the Commons, the affairs of Parliament will be carried on with a dignity befitting the Legislative Halls of any nation.

THERE is, however, another side to the story. That the new Premier is deficient in many respects in which the Leader of the Government ought to abound, is but too obvious. First and perhaps chief among his weak points will be the fact that he is comparatively unknown. It is something novel, not to say ominous, for the people of Canada to be obliged to ask: Who is this gentleman who has been raised to the position of the first of Canadians, and what is his record? Though Mr. Abbott was for ten years a member of the old Canadian Assembly, and has been at intervals for about as many more a member of the Dominion Parliament, he has made for himself no record as Parliamentarian or Statesman. The comparatively few acts of legislation with which his name has been associated as promoter have been almost exclusively connected with railway matters or questions of commercial law. This fact seems to show a lack of interest on the larger questions of politics, which argues a pre-occupation of mind or a lack of enthusiasm, either of which is fatal to broad statesmanship. Those who have been closely observant of Parliamentary affairs know that for the last three or four years Mr. Abbott has been Government Leader in the Senate, and that he has shown ability and skill, so far as occasion offered, in that position. But, unfortunately or otherwise, the Senate subtends but a very small section of the angle of vision of the average Canadian, even when his eyes are turned towards Ottawa, and any reputation achieved in the Senate Chamber is worthless for popular effect or purposes of political advancement. His special interest in railway matters suggests another serious objection—the fact of his intimate relations with the Canadian Pacific Railway. There can be no doubt that many thoughtful people are becoming somewhat alarmed at the tremendous influence this great corporation is acquiring in public affairs, and will view with apprehension the elevation to the Premiership of one who has been so closely identified with its interests from the first that he may almost be regarded as its representative. Mr. Abbott has, we believe, shown a proper appreciation of this fact by promptly resigning his position on the directorate of the road, and cabling to his agent in England to dispose of his stock. This is all that it is in his power to do under the circumstances. Whether this will suffice to relieve him wholly of the suspicion of being prejudiced in the interests of that road remains to be seen. Mr. Abbott will undoubtedly be placed at a serious disadvantage by the fact that his seat is in the Upper House, and not in the representative body. It is true that this is in accordance with British precedent, though it has never before occurred in Canada, and that Lord Salisbury is even now, as he has been for years past, ruling the British Parliament and nation with success from his place in the House of Lords. But it must be confessed that the Senate at Ottawa has thus far but dimly adumbrated its British prototype. It is doubtful if even the presence of the Premier will avail to greatly increase either the energy or the prestige of the assembly of elderly and for the most part wealthy gentlemen, few of whom can make any pretensions to statesmanship, who dwell in that lofty and serene atmosphere. If the new Premier means to be Head of the Government and the nation in reality, as well as in name, he will no doubt soon find it necessary to descend into the arena in which the real conflict is carried on. But that he can no doubt do at any time without much difficulty.

THE latest advices from Ottawa upon which we can comment before going to press are to the effect that after some days of anxiety and worry the one serious obstacle which has obstructed Hon. Mr. Abbott's efforts to form a Cabinet has been at last overcome and the Secretary of State induced to cease the obstinate struggle for his "right." Perhaps "overcome" is hardly the word. Certainly if it be true, as alleged in the telegram

which brings our latest information, that Mr. Chapleau has carried his point so far as to have received the promise of the portfolio held by the late Premier as the price of his conciliation, "yielded to" would better describe the process. It is always necessary to accept with a good deal of reservation the details furnished by the newspaper reports in regard to such matters, for they are necessarily based largely upon conjecture. We suppose, however, that this much may be accepted as certain: that the Hon. Mr. Chapleau has been engaged in a struggle for what he has designated his "right," viz.: the position of Minister of Railways and Canals—a position which he claims was promised him by the late Premier—in the new Administration. To what a low ebb must Canadian politics have fallen when one of the most important and responsible positions in the Government is claimed by a member of the Government as a personal "right." If any of us have been old-fashioned enough to suppose that a position in the Government is a position of trust to be bestowed by the responsible Head of the Government upon the man best fitted to serve the interests of the whole people in the discharge of its duties, we may as well banish the delusion. Such an idea is evidently behind the times. The question is no longer one of the best interests of the people, but of the reward of political services, of the gratification of personal ambition and, above all, of securing for the leader of a section the influence which is the outcome of patronage, that is of the subtle power of bribery in the form of appointments to lucrative offices in the public service! This struggle ought surely to serve as an impressive object-lesson for the people of Canada. Will they take the trouble to think about it and take in its full meaning? Hon. Mr. Chapleau is not without ability and is richly endowed with the gift of eloquence which nature has so freely bestowed upon many of his compatriots in the French Province. So far as we are aware, his record has not been stained by acts of corruption. But if he enters upon the office of Minister of Railways and Canals, it will be evident to all that his will be a case in which the office has not sought the man, but the man the office. This is in itself a damaging fact, and it becomes still more damaging, if it be true, as it seems almost impossible to doubt, that the irresistible argument which finally turned the scale in his favour was the conviction, which he certainly took no pains to remove, that the refusal to come to his terms might lead to his going over to the camp of the Opposition with his personal followers. Mr. Chapleau had certainly a right to decline the position of Secretary of State in the new Administration. Like any other honest man, he had the right to change sides in politics as the result of conscientious conviction. But the man who could be capable, or be believed capable, of changing sides from no higher motive than personal pique or disappointed ambition, can hardly be the man worthy of the highest trust. It is doubtful whether his crossing the floor under such circumstances would not in the end have been more injurious to the Opposition than to the Government.

IF it be true that Mr. Chapleau has been prevailed on to enter the Government on condition of receiving the portfolio of his choice, after the close of the session, it is clear that the withdrawal of Sir Hector Langevin is involved. His prospective withdrawal will greatly simplify the problem for the Government leaders. Sir John Macdonald's original plan of choosing ministers with particular reference to localities, so as to preserve a kind of balance of Provincial power in the Cabinet, has long since been lost sight of, or found impracticable, to a large extent. Yet it is obvious that beyond certain limits, local considerations cannot be safely disregarded. Everyone sees that it would never do to have both the great spending Departments of the Administration in the hands of representatives of Quebec. This consideration no doubt explains why Mr. Chapleau's ambition cannot be gratified at once. The rumour that Sir Hector will, at the close of the session, retire to a position of dignified rest as Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec has so much verisimilitude that we may pretty safely assume its correctness. This is, of