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CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

TOPICS—	PAGE
The Dying Chieftain.....	423
What of the Future?.....	423
The Late Chief Justice Dorion.....	423
Loyalty to Truth or to Creeds—Which?.....	423
Barbarism in Canada.....	424
Penny-Wise, Pound-Foolish.....	424
A Canadian Peerage.....	424
A Questionable Principle.....	424
The High Commissioner Defended.....	424
The Behring Sea Bill.....	425
The New Party in the United States.....	425
OTTAWA LETTER.....	X
MORE TRIUMPHS.....	Professor A. MacMechan, M.A.
A TWILIGHT FLOWER. (Poem).....	William P. McKenzie.
WORKINGMEN'S HOMES.....	A Housekeeper.
PROMINENT CANADIANS—JOHN COOK, D.D., LL.D., PRINCIPAL OF MORRIS COLLEGE, QUEBEC.....	Rev. Robert Campbell, D.D.
PARIS LETTER.....	Z.
CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM.....	W. A. Douglass, B.A.
A PARSON'S PONDERINGS CONCERNING THE REVISED VERSION.....	Rev. G. J. Low.
THE SEMITIC NOSE. (Poem).....	J. A. A.
THE RAMBLER.....	430
CORRESPONDENCE—	
The Impending Question of the Public Safety—Railways.....	A. Y. 430
MEMOIRS OF TALLEYRAND.....	431
THE SPRING MEETING OF THE ONTARIO JOCKEY CLUB.....	J. M. 431
ART NOTES.....	431
MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.....	432
OUR LIBRARY TABLE.....	432
LITERARY AND PERSONAL GOSSIP.....	433
READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.....	433
CRISIS.....	435

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NEVER before, we believe, in the history of Canada, were the eyes of the whole people fixed upon the death-bed of any man with such anxious solicitude, as that with which they have been for nearly a week, and are at the time of this writing, fixed upon that at Earncliffe. Everyone who knew anything of the national feeling of the Dominion knew that by far the most influential man in public life, for many years past, has been Sir John A. Macdonald. It has long been a common-place of Canadian politics that so long as the veteran Premier was alive and in the full possession of his powers, the political course of the country would be shaped in accordance with his views and wishes. However widely different persons, occupying different party standpoints, might vary in their conceptions of the secret sources of his power, in regard to the reality of that power all were agreed. But notwithstanding all this, the events of the last few days have exhibited the influence of the stricken Chieftain in a new phase, for which it is doubtful if either friends or opponents were fully prepared. Even the intense solicitude of which we have spoken has been overborne and almost swallowed up, so far at least as an astonishingly large proportion of the people are concerned, by a still stronger feeling—one closely akin to the grief which is the outcome of personal affection. It is now seen that the dying Premier had a hold not only upon the popular intellect and imagination, but upon the popular heart, to a degree which few, probably, had believed or imagined. This fact shows that there must have been in the man, as distinct from the politician, depths of genuine feeling and sympathy, of the existence of which many would have been a week ago incredulous. It is hardly possible that the popular instinct, swayed though it may often be by blind admiration, or fancied self-interest, could be so profoundly misled in such a matter. Not the least noteworthy characteristic of the universal sorrow is the fact that it seems shared in equal degree by people of all classes, from members of the Royal Family in England, to humble toilers all over

Canada, especially those parts of Canada in which Sir John has long been well known personally. Our readers generally will, we are sure, agree with us that the time has not yet come in which to attempt a judicial estimate of the character, in many respects unique, or a critical analysis of the influence upon the public life and the past and future history of the Dominion, of the man whose life forces are slowly ebbing away. So long as his spirit is still with us, even though hovering on the very borders of the unseen land, the occasion seems rather suited to the subdued tones of kindly sympathy than to the harsher notes of extravagant eulogy, much less of cold, discriminating criticism.

SPECULATION is, of course, rife as to the political future. As the physicians are agreed that the case of the stricken Premier is hopeless, and as prompt action upon his demise will be absolutely imperative, in the public interest, such speculation does not necessarily argue lack of proper feeling, or motive. It seems to be generally admitted that Parliamentary custom, if not constitutional precedent, will make it proper that the Governor-General shall first call upon Sir Hector Langevin, as the oldest and most experienced member of the Government, to form a Cabinet, or at least to advise in the matter. It is also pretty generally believed that Sir Hector will decline to attempt the first, and that under existing circumstances he will be wise in so doing. Conjecture then wearies itself in trying to determine who is likely to be deemed most eligible for the second choice. Three names are prominent, those of Sir Charles Tupper, Sir John Thompson and Hon. J. J. C. Abbott. The first is not a member of the Cabinet. He is not even in the country. It would, therefore, seem like a pretty severe reflection upon Sir John Macdonald's choice of colleagues, were he to be summoned from beyond the Atlantic to take his place at the head of the Administration. Moreover, Sir Charles Tupper, notwithstanding his great force of character and other strong qualities, would be exceedingly distasteful to the Opposition, and is, it is believed, more or less distrusted by many Government supporters. Both of the other gentlemen named are men of great Parliamentary ability, and of high personal character. It is devoutly to be hoped, for the sake of the future of Canadian politics, that the Conservative Premier to be chosen may be a man of pure and lofty moral principle, as well as of statesman-like ability. There can be little doubt that Sir John Thompson, albeit he may lack some valuable popular qualities, comes nearer to the ideal standard than any other member of the Government, or of the party it represents. But whoever may be the next Premier, and however the Government may be reconstructed, it is by no means likely that the new Administration will be in any immediate danger of defeat, unless, indeed, the reconstruction should be of such a nature as to precipitate a rupture between the rival Langevin and Chapleau factions, which are, it must be believed, eyeing each other with no friendly gaze. In any event, loyalty to the memory of Sir John, to say nothing of many other motives, will be strong enough to hold the party forces together for a time. Should there be, however, in the new Premier, a marked absence of the personal magnetism and marvellous tact which had so much to do with holding together the somewhat heterogeneous elements of the party under the old regime, a gradual disintegration may be looked for almost as a natural consequence of the great change. Many of the best citizens both in public and in private life—those whose judgment is held above the swirl of party feeling—realizing that the country is on the verge of a political crisis, and that the most momentous consequences may be involved in the events of the next few months, would, we believe, be heartily glad were a coalition of the best elements in the two parties possible. Such a coalition, capable of sinking all minor considerations, and devoting itself in singleness of purpose to the task of solving the problem of the country's destiny, might do a work for its future well-being, second only, if second at all, to that which was achieved by the Fathers of the Confederation. But, in the present state of party passion, such a thing is, we fear, too much to hope for.

THE death of Sir Antoine Aimé Dorion, Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench, removes from the scene of action one who was not only eminent by reason of his faithful discharge of the duties of his high judicial office, but one who in former years had taken a prominent part in Canadian public life. Mr. Dorion first entered Parliament in 1854, representing a Montreal constituency. He was one of the most prominent and influential of French Liberals of the old school, and prior to Confederation was a strong ally of the Hon. George Brown. He was a member of the short-lived Brown-Dorion administration, also of the Macdonald-Sicotte Cabinet. Mr. Dorion separated from most of his political friends on the question of Confederation, and was an ardent opponent of that movement so long as opposition could be of any avail. In 1867 he became Minister of Justice in the Mackenzie Government, a position which he resigned in order to accept the position on the Bench which he has since adorned. Without being exactly brilliant, Chief Justice Dorion was a man of sound judgment and fine abilities and, what is of even greater importance, especially from the posthumous point of view, he was a man of unbending integrity and unsullied purity, even his political enemies being judges. His personal relations with Sir John A. Macdonald are said to have been of the most friendly kind, notwithstanding their earlier political differences, and there is an element of the pathetic in the fact that the two should have been stricken down almost simultaneously by paralysis—the fell destroyer of so many brain workers.

THE "down-grade" movement, against which the most popular of English preachers has been vainly lifting up his voice for two or three years past, seems at length to have reached this continent, and to be gaining headway here. Setting out from Germany, the birth-place and cradle of the "higher criticism," a tidal wave of heterodoxy has passed somewhat lightly over Great Britain, and crossing the Atlantic is now threatening to sweep over America. Judging from present indications it would not be surprising if it were found to have increased its force and volume on striking the New World. Perhaps it is but in accordance with an American characteristic, or with a law which holds good generally in comparatively young communities, that such thought-waves should gain in superficial extent and velocity what they may lose in depth, as they dash over our shores. Be that as it may, all the large denominations in the United States seem to be just now in trouble, by reason of heretical teachers. Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists have all their heresy-mongers in prominent places. Were the issues not so exceedingly serious in the view of so many of the best citizens of all the countries concerned, one might be disposed to regard the periodical recurrence of these great thought movements simply as mental phenomena of an interesting kind, for the study of scientists and psychologists. As the matter stands, such enquiries must be left for a future day, perhaps for men of another generation. At present, and for some time to come, practical questions must take precedence of all others. Are these heresies really so deplorable and dangerous as they are supposed to be by the orthodox of the old school? It seems to be generally admitted that many of those who have departed more or less widely from the commonly received views regarding either the teachings or the authority of the Bible, are no less conscientious, reverent and devout than the most zealous of those who are ready to brand their views as heretical, and to cast out their names as evil. May it not be that the question at issue is oftener one of loyalty to creed than of loyalty to truth? Possibly the distinction between the two things is broader than most of us are willing to admit even to ourselves. It would seem unreasonable to deny the right of, say, the Presbyterian Assembly of the United States to veto the appointment to a chair in one of its theological colleges of a teacher who plays fast and loose with its cherished standards of doctrine, in such high-handed and defiant fashion as does Professor Briggs. But would not the Church courts do well, on the other hand, to consider carefully the effects and tendencies of the policy which is advocated by so many, of ruthlessly expelling from their communion every one who feels himself constrained to