

upon the earth ; and it seems impossible that we should ever cherish envy or hatred again.

May such aspirations not pass altogether without fulfilment !

" Still as the day comes round
For Thee to be revealed,
By wakeful shepherds thou art found,
Abiding in the field.
All through the wintry heaven and chill night air,
In music and in light thou dawnest on their prayer."

May that day spring from on high visit ourselves, our homes, our friends and our country !

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The Right Honourable Sir John Thompson.

IT is at all times difficult to estimate a great personality aright in the solemn pause between death and burial. It is peculiarly so, when the scene and circumstances make the death so impressive, that the public mind is touched and universal sympathy is evoked. When Lincoln was shot down by an assassin, just as he was steering the ship of State, through terrible storms, into a peaceful haven, and, as the whole nation was beginning that loud acclaim which will not cease so long as the nation lives, a calm estimate of the man and his services was impossible. The voice of sober criticism could not have been heard at such a time of sorrow, tears and passionate indignation. Sir John Thompson was not an Abraham Lincoln, and Canada went through no travail pangs in his day. But Sir John was our first minister and Canada is our country. He was a strong man and his strength was given loyally and ungrudgingly to serve what he believed to be our best interests. The Colonial Office and the Imperial Cabinet had recognized his powers and knew that—while he was a man who would always have to be reckoned with—they could depend on his sincerity and loyalty. He had taken his seat with the representatives of the greatest foreign powers, and had measured his strength with the Government which for years had claimed and exercised the right to capture our ships and throw our sailors into prison, and he had held his own with the best. All acknowledge that, both privately and publicly. As the highest possible acknowledgment of his merits, he was called to the Privy Council of the Queen, and just at that moment, at what seemed the crowning point and also only the beginning of his career, in the middle of his days and the full ripe glory of his powers, death touched him and he slept. The disaster was like that of the *Royal George*—

It was not in the battle
No tempest gave the shock—

yet, where at noon the gallant ship had been, an hour after only the calm waters of the harbour, on whose surface she had rested, were visible to men.

In such circumstances it is difficult to be simply just. Exaggerated and even hysterical language from friends and partisans can be overlooked, except when, used—as it sometimes is—simply for its market value, but a publicist owes a supreme duty to the public. He must remember that exaggerations and one-sidedness are subtle forms of untruth, and that, when the temptation to err is greatest, he is most bound to be on his guard and to do his duty.

What kind of man was the real Sir John ? Can we get to the core, behind the lawyer, the politician, the husband, the father, to that which determines every relation of life but which, itself, is much more than any or all mere manifestations ? In his case this is difficult. He has written or spoken little that is accessible to the public. Intimate and impartial friends are rare, and these would need to be able to look into him and to look above him in order to give a

trustworthy estimate. All that we can do is to see and hear him as he was on the Bench, at the Council Board, or addressing the House when Minister of Justice ; and thereafter, when, as Premier, he spoke to the people from "the stump" or struck fiercely at an adversary who had pierced through the coat of mail with which he was usually clothed. An equation of the impressions received by intelligent onlookers on those different occasions will give as correct a measure of the man as it is perhaps now possible for us to attain unto. His moral strength was seen on the Bench and as Minister of Justice ; and his limitations came out most clearly when, in taking the position of head of the party, he accepted the responsibility of saving it at all hazards. In either of the first positions he was at his best. In giving a decision or in speaking to the House on a departmental matter, he thought of nothing but the subject before him. He had studied it on its merits, according to established principles and precedents, and having come to his conclusions by due process of logic he stated them clearly and inexorably, without apparent feeling one way or the other. This absence of emotion gave him a true dignity, which was heightened by the total absence of rhetoric, and an apparent unconsciousness that there was a reporter's gallery in the House or a public outside. "You need not tell me that he is a good speaker, muttered a stranger whom an admiring friend had taken to hear the new minister : "I can't hear him ; he mumbles." The explanation of the speaker's impassiveness ought to have been manifest to the hasty critic. He was the authorized expositor of the law, and, in doing his work, emotion or a thought of the spectators was as entirely out of place, as it would be in an iceberg which happened to crush a schooner or two that came in its path. This even strength in the application of principles appeared all the greater, because he had no sympathy for modern ideas and—giving them no place in his mind—he was never distracted by them, while it was quite consistent with modesty of bearing and a genuine kindness of heart, which his friends never appealed to in vain, and which seemed to those who knew him in private the main features of his character. That strong and calm mind, well furnished with legal learning, combined with love of his profession, habits of strenuous application and a strong sense of public duty, fitted him for any judicial position, and it is no wonder that he himself always felt that the Bench was his proper place. When the exigencies of party obliged him to become Minister of Justice, his qualities enabled him to fill that position equally well. But the Premiership forced upon him work which must have been uncongenial and utterly hateful, and which, if long continued, would have destroyed him altogether. To hear him on a platform, explaining away the census returns or vindicating the National Policy, by arguments, the sophistry of which must have been apparent to himself, reminded one of Samson grinding corn for the Philistines. He could not take kindly to the game and therefore did not play it well. He never seemed at home on the platform ; never reached a high altitude ; never touched the public conscience ; never received inspiration from the assembled people and hence never gave back any to them. The revelations of 1891 shocked him, and there can be little doubt that he meant at first to take as firm a stand with regard to them as he had taken in the Rykert case. He began well, but soon found himself arrested by considerations which to him were supreme. The corruption was inextricably bound up with the party system and to shatter his party was to give office to the Opposition, who, in his opinion, were worse. The revelations of the Mercier-Pacaud regime, which followed, as well as his own Nova Scotian experiences had thoroughly persuaded him of that. To throw himself