

## THE TRUE WITNESS

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1892

## THE PREMIERSHIP.

Since last Friday every person in Canada has learned the news that Sir John Abbott, ex-Premier of Canada, has been succeeded in that important office by the Minister of Justice, Sir John Thompson. Few are the Canadians who have not read, during the past year, of the many objections, raised in certain quarters, to the premiership of this country falling to the lot of Sir John Thompson. All these small efforts of narrow minds are forgotten in the grand fact that Canada has for a first minister a man who is the peer of any statesman alive and head and shoulders over every other one in this country. In the hearty manner with which the leading organs of public opinion greeted his advent to the helm of state, we recognize a true patriotic and honestly Canadian spirit. The meaner ideas springing from religious animosities are at once relegated to perpetual oblivion.

There is reason for congratulations on all sides. We must firstly congratulate Sir John Thompson, himself, upon the exceptional honor that has been conferred upon him, and wish him years of strength and energy to carry on the onerous duties of the lofty state to which the will of the Canadian people has raised him. Then we turn to congratulate the Canadian people, irrespective of creed, race or politics, upon having today at the head of the country's federal government, a man of such lofty character, such pure reputation, such grand aims, such transcendent talents and such solid principles. We congratulate our co-religionists upon the honors which have been showered upon one of our Faith, and which—as rays from a convex mirror—reflect on all sides upon his fellow-Catholics. We congratulate our Protestant fellow-countrymen upon the high spirit of patriotic liberality which they have manifested, and the entire absence of those smaller and narrower prejudices, which our enlightened age is fast dispelling.

Sir John Thompson has been chosen Prime Minister of Canada, not because he happens to be a Catholic, or a Nova Scotian, but because he is pre-eminently the most able man in all the Dominion, as a lawyer, a statesman, a parliamentarian, a debater, and a national representative. His creed and his nationality no more affected the choice than did the color of his hair or the number of pounds he weighs. He has been chosen by the people of Canada, and that people he will represent and govern, without any distinction except that which springs from honest worth and real merit. The petty remarks of a few very ignorant people, about Sir John being a Jesuit and so on, leave no more impression upon the minds of serious and really educated men than does the

shadow of a cloud upon the surface of a lake. The truth is that the person who makes use of the name of one of the Catholic religious bodies in order to apply it to a layman, is to be pitied for his crass ignorance or else to be condemned for his presumption in using language that is meaningless. There is no public man on earth that can escape the shafts of envy or the arrows of political opponents; but they are few whose armor of integrity—political as well as private—can better bear the brunt, than can that of Sir John Thompson. To look squarely and impartially at his public career no one, of those who were loudest in their cries against him, can point to a single act that could—by any possible construction—be twisted into an evidence of unfairness, much less injustice. Place any man you will in Sir John Thompson's position, at any given moment during his parliamentary career at Ottawa, and we defy that man to be more impartial, more free from religious or other prejudices.

But, after all the matter is settled; Sir John Thompson is Premier of Canada. He has a golden opportunity; he holds the destinies of the country in his hands; his position is fraught with difficulties, and weighty responsibilities hang over his shoulders. He will require time to formulate his plans, a fair chance to put them into execution and an honest and unselfish support in his efforts to cope with all the questions and measures that shall demand his attention. Like the Lady of Branksome to Scott's "Last Minstrel," let Canada but, "Give him heart and give him time," and it requires no prophet to foretell that before very long, by word, deed, and policy, Sir John will confound all who mistrust him and will crush forever—by generous and liberal acts—the spirit of bigotry in the Dominion.

## THAT PROVINCIAL TAX.

Great indignation is felt to-day over the fact that the citizens are called upon, by the Local Government, to pay a tax that seems a real burden, and that, it is claimed, is necessary in order to save the Province from the awful debt that the extravagance of the late Government caused to be heaped up. While we feel that it is a hardship to be obliged to pay this portion of the debt so incurred, still we cannot but remark that it is a lesson for the electors that they would do well to take to heart. It should teach those who have a franchise and who are indifferent as to how they use it, or for whom they exercise it, that sooner or later their every mistake will come home to them—to their own pockets.

When the Mercier party was running everything with a high hand, and steering the provincial canoe as straight as an arrow into the rapids and rocks of financial destruction, our electors stood upon the shore and laughed with glee to see that crew shoot down stream and cheered them on with their votes and support. Little did they seem to reckon what the consequences might be. "Mercier is a clever fellow;" "they're the people's men down in Quebec;" "there is some life in this government." Such were their expressions, and they voted on, regardless of what their misrepresenting representatives were doing. Today they have to pay for all that; and they may be grateful that a change of government took place when it did, or they would find their properties mortgaged as well as taxed.

It is a lesson that should teach the electors that the sending of men to represent them in Quebec or in the City Council is no child's play; that a man's ballot is the weapon given by the constitution to defend his own interests and

his friends: that to vote for the one with most cheek, blarney, fair speeches, and hail-fellow-well-met methods of securing election is not voting for their own interests nor their own security. Let the warning be taken, and if at that price, the electors are taught to awaken from lethargy, and to take a lively and honest interest in the business of representation, the experience will be cheaply purchased.

## CONTRACT BY TENDER.

They have a peculiar way of doing things at the City Hall; already, in these columns, have we pointed out some of the methods of our civic fathers—notably in the case of the Electric Railway contract and the change of valuation. Electricity seems to set them mad, for in the case of the Electric Light Company's renewal of contract they have again run a-muck. However, it is apparently useless to protest; the press may fire away, important Commercial and Trade bodies may resolve and agree to condemn, still the City Council goes on keeping "the even tenor of its way," undisturbed by the noise of popular indignation. But every action in life, no matter how slight it may be, has its day of reckoning; and, even in this world, civic authorities are always brought to time in the long run.

Here are two letters, one from the Central Trades and Labor Council, the other from the Council of the Board of Trade. Coming from such influential sources, and especially the latter one, these communications bear a strong significance. It would be well for the City fathers to weigh well their actions, to study seriously the consequences, before giving out contracts in this unfair and very suspicious manner. By general tender—open and fair competition—alone should contracts of such major importance be awarded.

Thus speak the members of the Central Trades and Labor Council:—

"Montreal, November 23.

To the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Montreal: Gentlemen.—In compliance with the desire of the Central Trades and Labor Council, the representative body of the taxpayers of the city, I herewith enclose copy of resolution unanimously adopted by them at their regular meeting held on Thursday, 17th inst. "Resolved,—That this Central Trades and Labor Council, in session assembled, emphatically protest against the renewal of the contract for the lighting of the city by electricity to the Royal Electric Company without first calling for tenders for the same; as such an undertaking would be detrimental to the best interests of the taxpayers of this city; and that a copy of this resolution be sent to the City Council."

I remain, Sir,

Yours respectfully,  
P. J. RYAN,  
Sec. C. T. and L. C.

This is followed by a still stronger protest in the form of a letter from the Board of Trade. It is very emphatic:

"Montreal, November 23rd, 1892.

To the Mayor and Council of the City of Montreal: Gentlemen.—The Council of the Board of Trade desires to respectfully state that it has observed with much concern, from reports in the daily press, that there is a probability that your honorable body is about to depart from the well established and proper rule that no contract shall be granted until public tenders have been called for. In the interests of the citizens generally, and especially representing the commercial element of the city, the Council earnestly protests against any such possible departure, believing that no circumstances can warrant the granting of an important contract until public competition has been invited, and the best possible terms on which the needs of the city can be supplied have been ascertained. The Council feels that it would fail in its duty to the important constituency it represents did it not enter its protest against any such possible action in the most formal and explicit manner. It recognizes that if on free and open competition previous contractors who have performed their contracts in a satisfactory manner offer terms as favorable as others, then it is but fair that they should receive the renewal of an important contract but the obvious just and proper principle for which the Council contends is, as stated above, that under no circumstances should contracts be awarded until tenders have been called for.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,  
GEO. HADGILL,  
Secretary."

Surely these expressions should suffice to open the eyes of those worthy and disinterested representatives of the people. We trust there exists no agent with whom the *sine qua non* is deposited on condition of its being returned should the majority vote against the applicant for a contract. It is so with regard to promotions and positions in other countries, and in other cases. We hope our immaculate aldermen have no such establishment whereat their votes are decided by the amounts deposited. It would be a shame. The only way to

disarm even a suspicion, and (like Caesar's wife) aldermen should be "above suspicion"—is to have all contracts open to public tender. Otherwise our system would be somewhat on the very illogical and self-condemning principle that the Chief of Police seems to adopt or advocate, namely, that because other cities and large centres in Europe or America are notoriously criminal, therefore Montreal should not be expected to improve in its morality. The existence of licensed vice elsewhere is a sufficient reason for the authorities here—if not to encourage; at least, not to attempt to check its ravages. But we repeat the history-proven axiom: "Every act (and omission) has its day of reckoning."

## A SCHOOL MENACED.

This is a peculiar title for an article: it, however, suits the case in point. In the natural course of our editorials upon school matters we spoke, last week, of an institution that highly deserves all the praise we could possibly bestow upon it. It so happened that in commencing our list of institutions we very naturally began with the one nearest home—St. Patrick's Young Ladies' Academy. Since our article appeared one of the leading educationalists in Canada told us that he believed we did not say even all that could be told of the benefits derived from that institution, of its splendid system, and its adaptation to the wants of the district in which it flourishes. We were pleased to find our views corroborated by such an authority. But, very strange to say, we all unwittingly struck another nail on the head.

Since last week we have learned, with deep regret, that a movement is on foot that menaces the future prospects and the very existence of that admirable institution. We regret it the more since we found out the source of that danger. Here we are about to step upon very delicate ground; but our duty towards those of our co-religionists and fellow-countrymen in the centre of the city, oblige us to speak out most frankly. In so doing we do not wish to be understood as interfering in the affairs or prospects of any person, persons or body of persons. It appears that a very wealthy order of nuns has contemplated purchasing—and has already taken steps towards the consummation of that purpose—some four acres of land in the heart of the city. The property extends from St. Catherine street to Dorchester street. It is behind the Jesuit grounds and reaches to opposite the St. Patrick's Presbytery. From a window in the southern end of a building, upon that land, you could look into the window of St. Patrick's Academy upon St. Alexander street.

Now, no person disputes the right of the community in question purchasing just whatever property they please; but we do question the delicacy, not to say, Christian spirit, of invading the territory of a long established institution and by sheer force of money crowding out those who have labored so successfully for years in building up the establishment that gave education to the parish in the days of its struggles. Yet, this is the meaning of the movement. You may hedge it around as you please with excuses, pleas, circumlocution and arguments: there it stands in its unvarnished reality, the cold fact that the very purchase of that ground is a standing menace to the existence of the institution now flourishing within a stone's throw of it. Suppose they did not build upon the property, still they would be in a position to do so just when it suited them: suppose the building they might erect were not for a boarding-school, or day-school, at any hour they could