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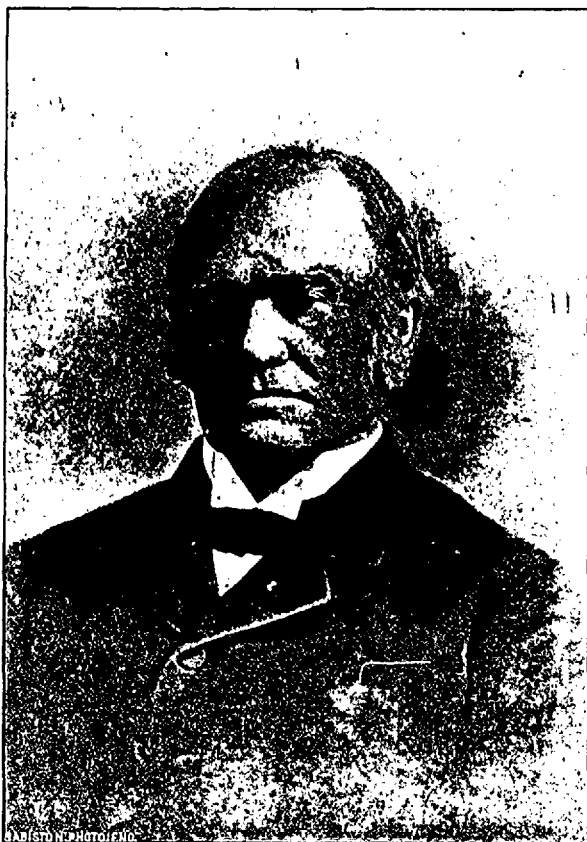
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PUBLISHERS:

THE MONTREAL PAPER MILLS COMPANY

588 Craig Street, Montreal.

MEN OF THE DAY



SIR J. J. C. ABBOTT

SIR J. J. C. ABBOTT

Of the three Premiers Canada has had since Confederation, the last alone enjoys the distinction of being a native born Canadian. Mr. Abbott's father, the Reverend Joseph Abbott, was born in Westmoreland, in the North of England, and his early life was spent in the border counties. He took his degree at a Scottish university, and was, soon afterwards, sent to Canada as a missionary, under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Joseph Abbott married Harriet, the daughter of the Reverend Richard Bradford, rector of the adjoining parish, and built a church and parsonage at St-Andrews. Here, in 1821, his eldest son was born, and the birthplace of the Canadian Premier still stands, almost unaltered, a quaint old-fashioned cottage with overhanging gables and long, low roof, nestling amidst a group of luxuriantly foliaged elm-trees, with the winding silver stream of the beautiful North River visible from its windows.

Mr. Joseph Abbott was a man of singularly active and energetic nature, possessing large practical capabilities, and exceeding in all kinds of mechanical work. He was of cultivated tastes, which fact is demonstrated by his writings, which are well known to the student of Canadian literature. Perhaps the most widely read of his works is that bearing the title of "Philip Musgrave, or the Adventures of a Missionary in Canada". Mr. Joseph Abbott's fine physique and perfect health enabled him to undertake an extended and arduous circuit of work, and he was in the habit of conducting three services each Sunday, with long drives of ten to fifteen miles between. Not only were his energies taxed by the exercise of his spiritual ministrations, but he was constantly consulted throughout the district, which at that time contained few professional men, to give his advice as doctor, surgeon, and legal adviser, in addition to the duties of his

legitimate calling. Notwithstanding the fact that his limited means scarcely permitted him the luxury of a library, still his house was full of books, and these always carefully chosen.

In that sparsely populated part of the country, there were few neighbours and, consequently, very little society; and, therefore, reading was the only amusement and occupation when the daily tasks were done. In this healthful, moral atmosphere, the eldest son of Mr. Joseph Abbott grew up to be a helping right hand to both parents, and his care of his younger brothers and sisters was unremitting in those early days, as well as in his later life. Throughout his career, he has ever been the mainstay of his family, a loving and helpful son to his father and mother, a judicious adviser and benefactor to his other relatives. In statesmanship, perhaps, these traits showing such kindness of disposition may count for little, but they may not be uninteresting to the great mass of the people of the Dominion, to whom the details of the domestic life of him who is at the nation's helm must appeal in that "touch of nature which makes the whole world kin."

Throughout many a long winter evening, while storms beat without and fierce winds whistled round the corners of the Rectory, a little group of children were held entranced in the school room by the voice of their elder brother relating to them thrilling and wonderful adventures with a vivid, boyish eloquence, foreshadowing, and perhaps contributing to a command of language which, in future years, would attract larger, but not more interested audiences.

At the age of seventeen, Mr. J. J. C. Abbott left the paternal roof to make his way in the world, and proceeded to Montreal. Here he entered a mercantile house; but, after a few months, the close air and confinement of city life began to tell upon the country-bred lad, and a severe illness was the result. After his recovery, he went to Gananoque, where he had obtained a position in the general business establishment of the Macdonalds, and there he remained until he came to Montreal, in 1843, to study at McGill College. At this time, his family also moved to the metropolis, his father having been appointed Bursar of the University, and thus he was once more in the home circle. At this period, in spite of Mr. Abbott's busy life and arduous studies, he found time to join in social amusements, and made a study of vocal music, in which branch he became very

proficient. His singing was a feature in Christ Church Cathedral, the principal Anglican place of worship in Montreal, and he continued to direct this admirably organized body of vocalists for six years. He graduated as a B. C. L., and studied law in the office of Messrs. Meredith and Bethune, and, in 1847, was called to the Bar of Lower Canada. His partnership with Mr. Justice Badgley and his marriage both took place within the next two years, his wife being Miss Mary Bethune, daughter of the Very Reverend J. Bethune, D.D., late Dean of Montreal. From earliest youth, Mr. Abbott had hoped to make his home in his native county of Argenteuil, but this desire becoming impracticable, it merged into the ambition of representing it in Parliament. Accordingly, in 1857, he stood for the county, and was then elected its member for the Canadian Assembly. The nominal majority, however, was against him, and it was not until after an arduous contest before a Committee of the House, lasting three sessions, that he was enabled to take the seat to which he was justly entitled.

A short time after Mr. Abbott's election to the Legislature, he was appointed to a lectureship in the Faculty of Law in the University of McGill, and, soon afterwards, Professor of Commercial Law, and, in course of time, Dean of the Faculty of Law. When his heavy professional duties compelled him to resign that position, he was appointed one of the Governors of the University, which office he still holds, having, in the interval, taken his doctor's degree in civil law in due course.

The work of his profession prevented him from taking a large part in the ordinary business of the Legislature, and then as ever he took but a minor interest in the violent disputes and debates on purely party questions. But his steady attention to the regular duties of the House was conspicuous, and having taken an active part in the agitation against certain objectionable clauses in the Militia Bill of the day, upon which the Government was defeated in 1862, he accepted the position of Solicitor General, under the late Mr. Sicotte as Attorney General, in the Coalition Government formed that year by the late Mr. Sanfield Macdonald, receiving, at the same time, his patent of Queen's Counsel. Mr. Sicotte was leader for Lower Canada, and the late Hon. Thomas D'Arcy McGee was one of his colleagues. On the dissolution, in 1863, which followed the de-

feat of the Sanfield Macdonald-Sicotte Government, Mr. Abbott declined to retain the office of Solicitor General in the new combination with Mr. Dorion, made by Mr. Sanfield Macdonald, and assumed an independent position in the general election which followed the dissolution. This new coalition became a purely party Government, formed from the Liberal side in politics.

As is well known, the result of that election was such that the Government of the day received but a small majority in the House, and the result was the deadlock, which was followed by Confederation.

Mr. Abbott was not an enthusiastic supporter of this great measure, fearing, as he did, the disadvantage at which the English-speaking population of Lower Canada would be placed under that system, and thinking that the preponderating influence of the French-speaking inhabitants of Lower Canada would reduce the minority to a state of practical impotence, and also that for the British settlers in the province no career in public life would remain.

It is a curious comment upon this anxiety, which was shared by most of the English-speaking inhabitants of Quebec, that since Confederation Mr. Abbott's friend and patron as a student, Mr. Meredith, held office as Chief Justice for a number of years under Confederation, receiving a knighthood in partial recognition of his ability and assiduity in the performance of his high duties. Another friend and contemporary, Mr. Johnson, succeeded Sir William Meredith, and still presides over the Superior Court as Sir Francis Johnson.

The doubts which agitated the Lower Canadian British, however, as to the preservation of the influence to which they might reasonably be entitled, gave rise to a warm quasi-private discussion at the time of the passing of the Confederation Act. Mr. Dunkin, Mr. Webb, Mr. Price, Mr. Somerville, and other representatives of the British population of Lower Canada, associated themselves together as a kind of committee to consider what form of protection could be devised to relieve the fears of that section of the people. It was unanimously considered that their chief danger would prove to be the possibility of changes in the boundaries of the English counties, by means of which sections of French-Canadian territory might be added to them, or they might be subdivided and attached to the

neighbouring parishes in such a way as to destroy the English-speaking majorities. Upon this suggestion, the committee unanimously agreed on a provision, which was drafted by Mr. Abbott, to the following effect: "It shall not be lawful to present to the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec for assent any bill for altering the limits of any of the electoral divisions or districts mentioned in the second schedule of this act, unless the second and third readings of such bill have been passed in the Legislative Assembly with the concurrence of the majority of the members representing all the electoral divisions or districts, and the assent shall not be given to such bill, unless an address has been presented by the Legislative Assembly to the Lieutenant-Governor, stating that it has been so passed."

The schedule referred to contains the names of twelve counties then represented by English-speaking members, and the provision was at the time thought to be a fair safeguard for the political existence of the English-speaking population. It was accepted by the Government and inserted in the Act, and, though its paternity has been claimed by more than one of the English-speaking members of the day, it is known by those well informed in public matters that Mr. Abbott was its author and proposer.

It is a curious comment also on the importance which, at the time, this provision obtained in the eyes of the English-speaking population of Lower Canada that, at this moment, some of the constituencies named in the schedule are represented by French-Canadian members, and that, in most of them, the French-speaking population has very largely increased. The probability is that ere long a majority of those counties will be controlled by the French inhabitants.

Mr. Abbott continued to represent Argenteuil up to 1874. During this time, he applied himself mainly to the legislative business of the house, taking little part in party discussion. While Solicitor General, he entirely re-modeled the Lower Canadian Jury system, and introduced and carried measures providing for the payment of Government fees by stamps, which is now universally prevalent, with many beneficial results. During the same period, he introduced the Insolvent Act of 1864, which was not passed at the time of the dissolution of the House. Upon the organization of the new Government, Mr. Abbott had the distinguished honour of being asked by the Premier for permission to use the bill which had been introduced while that Premier

was in opposition, and he was specially requested to conduct it through the House, which he did, though introduced in the name of the Government. This measure gave, in its principles, satisfaction to the country. In 1868, Mr. Abbott obtained the appointment of an important commission to consider its management and the possibility of its improvement, the result of which was an elaborate report based upon returns from most of the constituencies of the Dominion. On this report was based the Insolvent Act of 1869, which retained the principles and the leading features of the Act of 1864, altering some few of its details. It has been admitted that this Act has been the most successful effort yet made towards the establishment of an insolvent system in the Dominion. Subsequent amendments were not found to improve the operation of the Act, but the reverse. They exaggerated many of the difficulties, more especially in the matter of official assignees, and finally, in 1879, the law was repealed, and the commercial and financial community are now calling for the re-introduction of an insolvency system. Much benefit is expected from Mr. Abbott's experience in legislation of this description.

For many years, Mr. Abbott exercised unusual influence in the conduct of the work of legislation in the House of Commons. His proficiency in all branches of commercial law and in the law of private corporations made his assiduous attendance at the great standing committees on railways, canals and telegraphs, and on banking and commerce, of inestimable value. And in the latter committee he acted as chairman for a number of years with the high appreciation of its members and of the House of Commons. In the intervals of attendance upon Parliament, Mr. Abbott continued his practice as an advocate in Montreal, and was engaged in most of the important cases of the day. Among others, the St-Albans case attracted much attention at the time. This arose from the action of a party of about twenty-five men, who were soldiers of the Southern army, escaped or exchanged, and headed by Captain Bennett Young of that army. They managed to make their way to St-Albans in plain clothes, by different routes, and, by concerted action, met on the morning of a day in autumn in the public square of that town. With extraordinary audacity, they seized the principal officials, and confined them in the market square. They then proceeded to rifle various banks, and endeavoured to set fire to the town, but with little success, and they

finally escaped across the country over the border into Canada. They were arrested immediately, on the requisition of the United States Government, for murder and robbery, and their extradition was demanded.

Their pretension was that they had attacked St-Albans as a diversion in the hope of relieving to some extent the army defending Richmond from the pressure of the Northern troops.

The Canadian Government paid back the money stolen, and gave every facility to the United States Government in the attempt to extradite the prisoners, and Mr. Abbott, Mr. Laflamme, and Mr. Kerr defended them on the ground that they were belligerents, and not criminals. The proceedings were dramatic. The magistrate, in the first place, discharged the prisoners, who dispersed in various directions, but finally many of them were re-captured on a fresh warrant, and proceedings were re-commenced and continued for about four months, during which time one of the Attorneys of Record made his way to Richmond through the American lines, and obtained certificates from Secretary-at-War Benjamin, showing the identity of the men and the fact of their being soldiers in the Confederate army. The result was that they were held to be belligerents, and were discharged.

This case made a great deal of stir, both in Canada and the United States, and the record of it is cited in various English publications on the subject. The Confederates involved in it returned to their native country when peace was proclaimed, and several of them attained distinction in the South. Captain Young is now a grave railway president, exercising much influence in railway matters in the Southern States.

About this time, 1862, Mr. Abbott began his connection with the system of railways, which culminated in the Canadian Pacific Railway, by his appointment to the office of President of the Canada Central Railway. Under his auspices, a connection was made between the Brockville and Ottawa Railway under the name of the Canada Central Railway, and the line was extended as far westward as Pembroke. It was his connection with this railway that first drew Mr. Abbott's attention to the great scheme of a railway across the continent. From the beginning, he pressed in public speeches and otherwise the idea that the Canada Central was susceptible of indefinite extension until it reached the Pacific Ocean, and that it might

ultimately be the gateway of the great Pacific system. His interest in trans-continental communication never ceased from that time. In 1871-72, being still interested in some degree in the Canada Central, he urged upon Sir Hugh Allan the project of constructing the Canadian Pacific Railway, and he was actively engaged with Sir Hugh as provisional director, when a company was formed by that gentleman. The object of this was, in the first place, to secure its amalgamation with the corresponding company organized in Toronto by the Hon. Sir David Macpherson, and, afterwards, in the formation of the company which made the first attempt in England to raise money for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Mr. Abbott was one of the delegation of four,—composed of Sir Hugh Allan, the Hon. Adams Archibald, Major Walker, and himself,—which visited England in 1874, for the purpose of floating the bonds of the railway under the charter granted by Sir John Macdonald's Government in that year. In June, the delegation succeeded in procuring the signature of the late Baron Strousberg to a preliminary agreement for the construction of the line. That agreement, the negotiations for which were kept private, was immediately cabled to Canada, and, the next day, Mr. Huntingdon made a statement in the House of Commons, which was the inception of what is usually referred to as the Pacific Railway Scandal. The attack thus made upon the Government and upon the enterprise caused Baron Strousberg to abandon immediately the preliminary agreement that had been made, and the delegation returned to Canada unsuccessful in their mission. Subsequent events are well known to every Canadian. After a stormy session, a committee was appointed with power to examine witnesses under oath, but the law officers of the Crown having determined that this power was not legally justified, a commission was instituted to enquire into the allegations of Mr. Huntingdon. After a long investigation, the committee reported, Parliament was called together, and, after a debate of some weeks, the Government of Sir John Macdonald resigned office in October, 1873.

In this affair, Mr. Abbott had some prominence, as the confidential legal adviser of Sir Hugh Allan, and in that capacity he became cognizant of some of the transactions which were complained of by Mr. Huntingdon between Sir Hugh Allan and the Government. He was present on the occasion of the request of the late Sir Georges

Cartier to Sir Hugh Allan for a subscription to the election fund, and assisted in writing the letters which were exchanged between Sir Georges and Sir Hugh on the occasion. Subsequently, Sir Hugh having left for Newfoundland, Mr. Abbott, as his confidential adviser, was applied to by Sir John Macdonald to request further subscriptions from Sir Hugh to the fund. This he did, and he was the medium of the transmission of that renewed subscription.

Mr. Abbott was re-elected at the subsequent general election of 1874, but was unseated in 1875 on an informality in the voters' list for one of the parishes of his county. At the new election, which took place in that year, he did not offer himself, but the gentleman who opposed him in 1874 was again a candidate, and succeeded in being returned. Upon a contestation of his election, this gentleman was unseated, and personally disqualified for acts done in the election of 1874 against Mr. Abbott. At the general election of 1878, Mr. Abbott again presented himself, but was not returned. Dr. Christie, his opponent, had the recorded majority, but he was unseated on a contest. In 1879, Mr. Abbott defeated Dr. Christie, but was unseated, and, at the election which followed, he was again returned by a large majority, and sat until the end of that Parliament. At the next general election, he was elected by an increased majority. In 1886, he retired from the House of Commons, and declined re-election.

In 1876, while not a member of the House, Mr. Abbott was consulted in connection with legislation, more especially on the subject of the Insolvency law, relating to which he assisted in framing an act which was introduced by the present Chief Justice of Nova-Scotia, but which was not ultimately passed. Upon the accession of Sir John Macdonald to power in 1878, the question of the propriety of the dismissal by Lieutenant-Governor Letellier de Saint-Just of his provincial ministers came under consideration. After an important and instructive debate, a resolution was passed condemning the action of the Lieutenant-Governor. This was followed by a recommendation to the Governor-General that the Lieutenant-Governor be dismissed; but, before acting upon this recommendation, it was determined to refer the whole question of the constitutionality of the dismissal of Mr. Letellier to the Home Government. For this purpose, Sir Hector Langevin and Mr. Abbott were appointed delegates to lay the matter before the Colonial Minister. They proceeded to England and re-

remained there during a period of three months, while the subject was under discussion, and returned with a State paper of great value and importance, prepared by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, then Colonial Minister, approving of the action of the Government in respect to the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec. While in England on this occasion, Sir Hector Langevin and Mr. Abbott conducted several matters of importance for the Canadian Government, among which were measures relating to the admission and transport of cattle from the United States through Canada, which have been successfully continued to the present day.

Mr. Abbott's connection with the Canada Central Railway, besides tending to direct his thoughts towards the great Pacific trans-continental scheme, led to his ultimately becoming the purchaser of a share in the whole Canada Central enterprise, Mr. Duncan MacIntyre being the principal owner. Under the energetic management of the latter gentleman, the construction of the Canada Central was pushed forward towards North Bay, and, in the spring of 1880, that road being nearly completed, and the scheme of Mr. Mackenzie's Government not appearing likely to be in any degree successful, Mr. MacIntyre and Mr. Abbott discussed the possibility of forming a company to construct the Pacific Railway from North Bay. It was thought feasible that it might be brought on from that point to a junction with a portion of the railway which the Mackenzie Government had begun near the Pacific coast, taking in the link that had also been begun by that Government between Port Arthur and Winnipeg in March, 1880. A suggestion to this effect was conveyed to Sir John Macdonald, which was prepared by Mr. Abbott, and signed by Mr. MacIntyre. The latter gentleman communicated, at the same time, with Messrs. Stephen, James J. Hill, of St-Paul, Sir Donald Smith, Mr. Kennedy, of New-York, and Mr. R. B. Angus, and finally obtained their concurrence in the project which had been submitted to the Government. An informal intimation was received that the project was looked upon as possible, but that it should be presented to European capitalists with a view of obtaining the best possible terms for the Government. As is now generally known, Sir John Macdonald and Mr. Pope proceeded to England, and negotiations took place with several parties, but finally the Canadian syndicate, strengthened by the addition of Sir John Rose, of London, and Baron Reinach, of Paris, came to an un-

derstanding with the Government as to the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

On the return of Sir John Macdonald to Canada in the autumn, the negotiations were pursued. The syndicate, chiefly represented by Mr. Stephen, Mr. MacIntyre and Mr. Abbott, with the frequent concurrence of the Canadian and American members, entered upon more detailed negotiations with the Government. A draft, prepared by Mr. Abbott, of the proposed contract was submitted. This formed the basis of subsequent negotiations, and in the main formed the contract provisionally agreed upon, and, after two months' constant discussion, was signed, in October, 1880. A special session of Parliament was called in order that the matter should be put through in time to start the work vigorously in the spring. The necessary legislation was completed, the Company incorporated, and the contract finally signed on the 17th of February, 1881. Immediately afterwards, Mr. Stephen, Mr. MacIntyre, Mr. Angus, and Mr. Abbott went to England to make the necessary financial arrangements for the Company. The members of the syndicate were elected the directors of the Company, and Mr. Abbott was appointed standing counsel. From that time forth until the completion of the road, he took an active part in all its transactions and management, including its financial arrangements and issues, the preparation of its legislation, and the organization of its various combinations and acquisitions of existing railways. In fact, though not a stockholder, being precluded from holding stock by the existing law of Parliament, he took the same active interest in the enterprise as if he had been a member of the syndicate.

During this period, though he continued to be a Member of Parliament, he scrupulously avoided acting in his public capacity in any matter affecting the Pacific Railway, never having voted or spoken on any of its measures. For some time, he was excused from voting on his own statement of his interest in the Company, which he invariably took occasion to make, when a question relating to it came before Parliament. But, as he could not state that he was directly pecuniarily interested in the Company, and therefore found that he might be forced to vote, he took the course of leaving the House whenever a Canadian Pacific measure came before it. Though universally recognized as one of the most active promoters and workers

in the great Canadian Pacific Railway enterprise, it was never imputed to Mr. Abbott, in the warmest political controversy, that he used his political influence in any way to further the undertaking.

The success of this magnificent Canadian highroad to the Pacific was in no small degree furthered by the work of Mr. Abbott in the departments of its organization in which he laboured, and his name is always associated with the promoters of this great national enterprise.

Upon the completion of the railway across the continent, the disqualification caused by the holding of stock in the Company was repealed, and Mr. Abbott then acquired stock in it, and was elected one of its directors, and retained this position until he resigned upon accepting the appointment of Prime Minister of Canada.

In 1887, Mr. Abbott was elected Mayor of Montreal by a majority of about 2,000 votes over his opponent, Mr. Rainville. In 1888, he was re-elected by acclamation, and, the same year, was appointed President of the Corporation of the Royal Victoria Hospital, an institution which had recently been founded and endowed with about \$1,100,000 by the munificence of two citizens of Montreal, Lord Mount-Stephen and Sir Donald A. Smith, in commemoration of Her Majesty's Jubilee. The construction of the stately Hospital buildings, costing above \$500,000, has been proceeded with under Mr. Abbott's supervision as president, and they now form one of the most striking architectural ornaments of a city already rich in imposing edifices, both public and private. The buildings were designed by Saxon Snell, Esq., of London, who has a continental reputation for the designing of hospital buildings.

In 1888, Mr. Abbott was appointed a commissioner to negotiate with Australia for closer trade relations and electric communication, for which position his knowledge of commercial, legal, and diplomatic subjects eminently fitted him. He made his preparations for his Australian mission; but the movement for Confederation began and seemed likely to be successful, and it was thought best to delay his departure till power in such matters should be concentrated by the union of the Australasian provinces.

After Mr. Abbott's retirement from the House of Commons, he was offered by Sir John Macdonald a seat in the Senate, with the leadership of that body and a membership of the Privy Council.

These marks of confidence he accepted in the winter of 1887-88, and, until the 13th of June, 1891, continued to act as leader of the Senate and member of the Privy Council without remuneration or portfolio.

At the beginning of the session of 1891, he was invited by Sir John Macdonald to accept the portfolio of President of the Council, retaining his position in the Senate, and, though his appointment was not actually made, he performed the duties of that department until the lamented death of Sir John Macdonald, in June, 1891.

On the 13th of that month, Mr. Abbott accepted the trust committed to him by His Excellency the Governor-General as Prime Minister of Canada, and he was called, on the Tuesday following, to proceed with the business of the country before Parliament without any break in its continuity, or any change in its policy. His former colleagues, with great unanimity, consented to continue to occupy their former positions in the Cabinet, and, although the session of 1891 was one of the most arduous which Canada has yet seen, and presented constant and ever-increasing difficulties to the Government, in consequence of the numerous administrative errors and offences which were disclosed in Committees of the House of Commons, the Conservative party presented an unbroken front throughout the session, and the affairs and legislation of the country proceeded without material interruption.

During the whole of his long life, Mr. Abbott has been a working man, with great facility for despatch of business and great success in its transaction. Though he has retired from the business of his profession, the confidence which is reposed in him by the public is manifested by the various positions of trust which he has occupied, some of which he relinquished on accepting the office of Prime Minister; others he continues to hold. As has already been stated, he is a Governor of the University of McGill, having passed through as a student in that University. He is the life President of the Fraser Institute, founded by his friend, the late Hugh Fraser, a merchant of Montreal, by whose will he was constituted life President, and it is mainly owing to his indefatigable labours, and largely to his contributions, that the Institute owes its present efficiency. He still retains the position of President of the Royal Victoria Hospital, and is President of the Citizens' Insurance Company, and a Director of the Bank of Montreal, and of the Standard Life Insurance Company. On his ac-

ceptance of office, he resigned the directorate of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, believing it to be incompatible with his position in the Government.

It is as yet too soon to attempt to deal with Mr. Abbott's career as Prime Minister of the Dominion. Suffice it to say that his Government emerged from the unprecedented session of 1891 with the loss of one Minister, but otherwise the party remained as united and as strong as when he assumed its direction. He has taken a stand against the frauds and irregularities which were developed or pointed at by the proceedings of committees during the session, and has laboured earnestly with his colleagues in carrying out the declaration which he took an early opportunity of making from his place in the Senate, that the offenders should be sought out and punished, "be they high or low, great or small." Mr. Abbott is steadily winning the confidence of the people, as a consistent, determined, and indefatigable administrator. It was very generally supposed that, on the death of Sir John Macdonald, chaos would follow, and many people said: "After him, the deluge." But the country has been surprised to find the danger averted, and the business of the State firmly and steadily proceeded with, notwithstanding the superhuman efforts of the opponents of the Government to break it down by every conceivable means. That this should have been the result of the dreaded shock of the death of the late Premier has been a source of much pride to Mr. Abbott's friends and of relief to the party.

It is a somewhat invidious task to endeavour to analyze the character of a man who is still with us; but it may not be uninteresting to remark upon some of the leading features of Mr. Abbott's mental constitution, which have been uniformly manifested throughout his career. One of his prominent characteristics is his strong sense of justice and a corresponding sense of injustice or oppression. Remarkable for his dislike of litigation, of which grateful clients, who have been dissuaded from cost by lawsuits, frequently remind him, no sooner was he satisfied that injustice was being done or oppression practised, than, with intense concentration of energy, he would throw himself into the case, and press it to the end with indomitable tenacity. And it was frequently remarked of him that the poorer and more defenceless the client was, the more determined and persistent was the struggle made for him. To his great power of concentration,

he added indefatigable industry, thorough training in legal, financial, and business affairs, and a rapid perception of the material points in any matter brought before him. These qualities enabled Mr. Abbott, during his career at the Bar, to accomplish with more than ordinary success a vast amount of business, and they still characterize his methods, though his vigour and energy are affected by his increasing years.

As a speaker, Mr. Abbott's appearances in the Commons' Hansard are few. When appointed to the leadership of the Senate, he was forced to sustain the burden of much of the debate, and as he had to explain and pass through the House bills dealing with the whole thirteen departments of the Government, his speeches necessarily covered a range co-extensive with his entire functions. Without aspiring to be an orator, his speeches were distinguished by their accurate knowledge of the subject, logical argumentation, and well chosen and courteous language. The late Premier frequently said of him that he realized more fully the model of the English Parliamentary speaker than any other member of the Dominion Parliament. Only rising to eloquence when carried away by some deeply interesting subject, he always soon resumed his ordinary clear argumentative tone. His influence in the Senate is considered to be greater than that of any of the previous leaders; and it was remarked that, when he entered the senate chamber for the first time after accepting the office of Prime Minister, he was not only received by acclamation by both sides of the House, but that the complimentary eulogiums addressed to him by the leading Liberals were, at least, as warm and sympathetic as those of his own followers.

Personally, Mr. Abbott is retiring in his tastes and habits to the verge of diffidence. Fond of literature and of arts, a constant and voluminous reader, he has found his principal amusement, during a busy life, in these pursuits, and in farming and gardening. His fine residence in Montreal abounds in books and art treasures, and his lovely country place, at Ste-Anne, embellished and beautified mainly in accordance with his own taste and designs, is one of the objects which attract tourists. All parade, ostentation, and even ordinary publicity, are to the last degree distasteful to him. He has always studiously avoided public meetings, public dinners, banquets, and the like, and, when pressed to accept nomination as Mayor, he stipu-

lated for exemption from the "ornamental duties" of the office. During two years of his Mayoralty, his duties were thoroughly and efficiently performed, but only on one occasion was he to be seen wearing the gold chain of office. With this retiring tendency, he pictured the happiness he promised himself in his old age in a quiet life among his family and intimate friends, and in the enjoyment of books and rural pursuits. It is an open secret that, in accepting his present position, he sacrificed his inclinations and his plans for his declining years to what he thought was his duty, and his friends think he will seize the earliest honourable opportunity for returning to them. It is to be hoped that the burden of his three score and ten years and the labours of his present responsible and arduous position will not shorten the latter years of a long and useful life, and deprive him of a well-earned and tranquil retirement from work and anxiety.

MAUD OGILVY.

Montreal, 31st December, 1891.



Albion 3rd January 1892

Dear Sir,

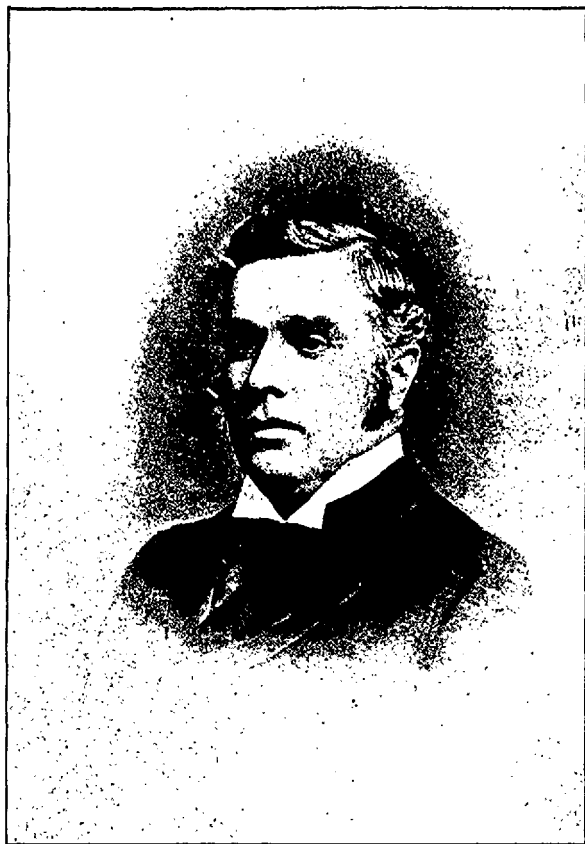
On looking over Mr's Pychris sketch of my life, I find no mention of the 'Constitution Manifesto' as it is called, which I signed about forty three years ago, along with Sir Francis Hudson, Sir John Rose, Mr. Westcott, and many other well known men. I signed on this subject in the debate in March 1899, and a short extract from my speech will define my position. I said: "The avowed object was the overthrow of an outcast aristocracy in a portion of the population of the Province of Quebec, which is among the most loyal of the Provinces of Canada. Most of the people who signed it were more loyal than the English people themselves." * * * The General with our volitions disregard as they pleased.

"their feelings, and in contempt of their services and
"of their loyalty, carve down out of the moral fibre
"and under the sanction of the Bill. The people were excited
"of their injured: this paper. x x x I am often re-
"proached with that; it does not trouble me much.
"When I raised 300 volunteers at the time of the Trent affair,
"in a few days, in the loyal and gallant old County
"of Argenteuil, I received from the representative of my
"that, condoned the Commission of Colonel; and I thought
"twice led that Battalion of my youth. And I have
"in repelling invasions of the frontier to assist
"neighbourers territory." signed from within our

I shall be pleased if you can use the
information, when you come to your book
D. H. }
r. }
r. }

W. A. A. A.

MEN OF THE DAY



SIR JOHN THOMPSON

SIR JOHN THOMPSON

No other man out of all that have set their names high in the roll of Canadian public men has ever made his way to the front in so few years, after his entry into the field of Dominion politics, as Sir John Thompson.

When he was called to Ottawa by Sir John Macdonald, towards the end of the year 1885, and made Minister of Justice and Attorney-General for the Dominion, he was all but unknown outside of his own province. Whatever reputation he had won did not go far beyond the bounds of Nova-Scotia. Honours have crowded thick upon him since then, and his progress to the eminence on which he now stands should compel the serious consideration of those who point out that conviction are superfluous nowadays and principles at a discount, and that men go fast and far in politics without either.

He came to Ottawa in a grave crisis of the public affairs of Canada, and was soon recognized in Parliament as possessing a force of mind and character which fitted him pre-eminently to cope with great crises and great matters of policy. It was not long before the country came to know that he was a man who would not submit to be merely as one of the cards shuffled by an astute hand and dealt out on the crimson baize of the table in the Privy Council chamber. Neither his friends nor his opponents in politics would dream now of so misconceiving him. At times, however, since his coming to Ottawa, sections of the people of the Dominion have been greatly at fault in their estimate of the new power in the Government. His ability was recognized, perhaps, before his disinterestedness was understood.

He is a man upon whom Nature has laid her hand to form a thoroughly genuine and independent character. Incapable of compromising with his conscience, he never spares himself labour to be

in the right. There are no difficulties before which his industry shrinks. He studies his subject and masters it, and, when he is once convinced, he is adamant.

The ordeal he had to face in making his first notable speech in the House of Commons might well have dismayed a less courageous man. It was during the memorable debate on the resolution introduced by Mr. Landry, of Montmagny, declaring the deep regret of Parliament that the sentence of death passed upon Louis Riel, the leader of the revolt in the North-West, who had been convicted of high treason, was allowed to be carried into execution. The debate had lasted more than a week, and the mover of the resolution had been followed by Sir Hector Langevin, Lt.-Col. Amyot, Mr. Royal, Mr. Gigault, Mr. Clark Wallace, Mr. Cameron, of Huron, Mr. J. J. Curran, Mr. Coursolle, Mr. Wood, of Brockville, Mr. Charles Langelier, of Montmorency, Mr. Rykert, Mr. Béchard, Mr. Laurier, Sir Adolphe Caron, Mr. Desjardins, of Hochelaga, Mr. Landry, of Kent, New-Brunswick, Mr. Guay, Mr. MacIntosh, and Mr. Edward Blake, the last of whom had spoken during the afternoon and evening of March 19th, 1886. It was past midnight, when the leader of the Opposition brought his powerful and eloquent denunciation of the Government to a close, and the new Minister of Justice moved the adjournment of the debate. On the afternoon of the following Monday, the galleries round the chamber of the House of Commons were crowded, and the most intent expectation awaited the taking up of the debate. When the new Minister of Justice arose, he had before him the task of justifying the Government in having allowed the execution of Riel. In the debate on the Speech from the Throne, not many days before, Mr. Blake had remarked that Mr. Thompson, he had not yet received the honour of his present title, - had "entered Federal politics, as the French would say, by the great gate," and that "for him there had been no apprenticeship in Parliament." In what manner the Minister of Justice acquitted himself on that day needs not to be recounted here. His speech was strong, clear, convincing. Master of himself and of his ideas, and master too of his hearers, he pierced the fine spun net of Mr. Blake's argument with the most direct and irresistible skill, and replied to him point by point with triumph. It was not his eloquence which subdued the critical, censorious body he was addressing, for eloquent he is not. An

orator he does not pretend to be. His appeal was not to the sympathies or the passions. It was the reason of his hearers he addressed. The power of his argument bore down all before it. There was in his speech, moreover, the special note of distinction which marks all his public utterances; for now, as then, whenever he speaks, he lifts politics from a lower to a higher level.

When he made his speech in the great Riel debate, Sir John Thompson was in his forty-second year. He was born in Halifax, November 10th, 1844. His father, John Sparrow Thompson, who had come to Nova-Scotia from Waterford, Ireland, his native place, and was for a time Queen's Printer, and, afterwards, Superintendent of the Money Order system of the province, had him educated in the public schools of Halifax, and the Free Church Academy. His early training fashioned him well for ways of patient, faithful intellectual endeavour, and we may well suppose that Sir John Thompson owes in no small measure to those youthful years, devoted to study under his father's care, the habits of mind which have gone to determine the course of his life. No one who has often heard him speak can fail to be impressed by the conviction that he devotes himself with unresting energy to the mastering of all the facts having to do with any question with which he has to deal, and that he seeks to divest himself wholly of all possible prepossessions before making a judgment. He has shown that he has courage, though it is not the courage to overcome his convictions; and this courage must have been strengthened in him by his early training.

Of his skill in debate the young man gave early indications in the debating clubs of Halifax, where he gained a reputation as one before whom greater triumphs lay when he should seek distinction in wider fields. In 1859, he was articulated as a student-at-law in the office of Mr. Henry Pryor, who was, afterwards, stipendiary magistrate in Halifax. He had already made himself a skilled stenographer, and he now turned his skill to account in reporting the debates in the Nova-Scotia House of Assembly. In the official reports of the debates of that Legislature for the year 1867, which the curious may find for the seeking on the shelves of the Library of Parliament, Mr. John George Bourinot, now the learned Clerk of the House of Commons, who was the official reporter, makes acknowledgment in his preface of the assistance of Mr. John S. D. Thompson. In the fol-

lowing year, the preface to the official debates has the signature of Mr. Thompson, who had succeeded to the place of reporter-in-chief. During the four following sessions, he continued to report the debates. These years of service on the floor of the Legislative Chamber of his native province were of advantage to him in giving a thorough and ready knowledge of the procedure of Parliament and a complete acquaintance with the politics and political leaders of the time, which stood him in excellent stead when he himself became a member of the House of Assembly.

He was called to the Bar in July, 1865, in his twenty-first year. Five years later, he married Miss Annie Affleck, the daughter of Captain Affleck, of Halifax. A year later, he became a convert to the Roman Catholic Church. In the practice of his profession, he was notably successful from the beginning, and before many years he held the place of acknowledged leader of the Halifax Bar.

In December, 1877, after having served as an alderman and as chairman of the Board of School Commissioners, in Halifax, during several previous years, he was elected at a bye-election to represent Antigonish in the provincial House of Assembly. He brought a great accession of debating strength to the Opposition, and when the Liberal Government was overthrown in the general election of the following year,--in which he stood again for Antigonish, and was re-elected by acclamation, the portfolio of Attorney-General went to him as a matter of course in the new Government of which Mr. Simon H. Holmes was leader. It was known as the Holmes-Thompson Government. On the eve of the next provincial election, he was left at its head by the retirement of Mr. Holmes, who had held the portfolio of Provincial Secretary. The Government went before the people to stand or fall by the judgment to be passed by the province upon Mr. Thompson's Municipal Corporation Act, which incorporated each county in the province and provided for local municipal self-government, instead of the old system of government by Sessions of the Peace and by the Grand Jury, vesting the power of expenditure of the road and bridge moneys in the municipal councils, and making extensive reforms in the method of disbursing such public grants. Though a measure more to the lasting advantage of the province was never passed in the Legislature, it at once raised a storm of opposition against Mr. Thompson's Government. A thou-

sand voices were lifted against it from a thousand stumps. The Liberals were pledged to make havoc of it, if they were returned to power. Magistrates all over the province, whom it deprived of the share they had had in governing the counties, and an army of people who had been accustomed, before the Act was passed, to obtain or look for appointments carrying with them the expenditure of road and bridge moneys, fought for its repeal with all their might. After a hotly contested campaign, the Government was defeated at the polls, in July, 1882, by a majority of five members. Mr. Thompson was himself again returned for Antigonish. A Liberal Government came in, and, a month or two later, he was, to the great acceptance of the Bar of the province, appointed a judge of the Supreme Court of Nova-Scotia. When he went out of the House of Assembly, he was in his thirty-eighth year. He had been a severely honest politician; and though politics, perhaps, were not wholly congenial to him, he had won a high reputation in his province. It was chiefly as a jurist that he had stood forth from amongst his colleagues in the Cabinet. Then as now, he never engaged in debate without making manifest his great knowledge of law and of the principles of law. When he was in the Government of Nova-Scotia, the public affairs of that province were in an unusually critical condition. He attempted several reforms, among them the abolition of the Provincial Senate or Legislative Council. The work of constructing the railway from New-Glasgow to the Strait of Canso, which had been abandoned under the previous administration, was resumed under new conditions, and the road completed before 1882. The railway in the western counties, which had likewise been abandoned, was finished from Digby to Yarmouth, a distance of eighty miles, and put into operation. The preceding Government had made the beginning of a floating public debt, and the incoming administration had to take up a burden of more than \$300,000. When Mr. Thompson retired from office in 1882 and made way for the Liberals, the debt had been decreased and the regular expenditure so far lowered as to be brought within the limits of the income of the province.

His father was a friend and associate of Joseph Howe, and thus, though his strongest predilections have always been for the study and administration of law, there is something to be said on the score of heredity for his having become a politician. When he accepted,

however, the office of judge of the Supreme Court of Nova-Scotia, in the summer of 1882, it was said of him that he fulfilled then what has been his chief ambition since he was a young man. More than that, he restored strength to a tribunal which had been losing somewhat of its old prestige. It is said by a friend of Sir John Thompson that, when he was made a judge of the Supreme Court, he formed a resolution to which he adhered to faithfully while he was on the Bench, not to allow any day to pass without at least five hours' study of law. These three years of quiet, continuous thought and study we may well believe were more to his desire than the preceding years which had been filled with the noise of politics. Among the permanent results of his work, while he was on the bench, is the Judicature Act, which became law in 1884. It was drafted by him, and it simplified greatly the practice of the courts. He also found time to deliver a course of lectures on "Evidence" in the Law School at Dalhousie.

When the Dominion Government needed him at Ottawa, he loyally allowed his own inclinations to weigh less with him than the necessities of his former political friends. He resigned from the bench of the Supreme Court of Nova-Scotia on November 25th, 1885, and was, immediately afterwards, appointed Minister of Justice of the Dominion. In a leading article in the *Mail*, at the time of his appointment, when all Western Canada was curious about the new minister from the East, appeared the following passage regarding him: "Starting, like nearly all young men of his time, as a follower of Howe in the ante-Confederation period, more from personal fondness, perhaps, than from a profound conviction, he gladly acquiesced in the acceptance by Howe, in 1867, of the 'better terms' which, by the wise determination of Sir John Macdonald, were made the sign and seal of Imperial as well as of Canadian politics. Since 1869, he has been a most faithful, high-minded, unselfish, and respected advocate of the policy of the great chief of the Liberal-Conservative party of Canada. As a lawyer, his success has been remarkable. He has the faculty of initiative, and is really 'learned in the law.' As an orator, his style is usually subdued, but effective, and in due season on proper provocation he can exercise a power of declamation quite remarkable in one who is not effusive in manner. His gift of accomplished sarcasm has been the secret

terror of a good many bumptious gentlemen. Every success he has won, and all the popularity he has preserved, and all the authority he has attained, are due in part to the fact that his high and unstained personal character has obtained for him a position which no one has ever attempted with any hope of success to assail."

He did not come to Ottawa without the experience which should qualify a man for high office. He had borne the heat and the burden of the vigorous labours of the press, of the law courts, of the political arena, of the Legislature, and of the Bench. The story goes that, when Sir John Macdonald entrusted his present portfolio to him, several Ministerialist members of Parliament went down to Earncliffe to declare their dissatisfaction. The Premier, after listening to their complaints, made answer, with that oracular waggling of the head which those who knew it will never forget: "Gentlemen, wait until six months have passed before you form your judgment of the new Minister of Justice. Come to me then, if you will, and tell me that I have made a mistake." When the six months were passed, no voice was raised from the Ministerialist ranks against the new Minister's ascendancy, and the leaders of the Opposition had learned that he was their master in debate,

It is often said of him that his manner of speaking is that of a judge; and of his ordinary matter of statement in the House it is said quite truly. But though he came into Parliament from his place on the Bench of the Supreme Court of his own Province, he did not come as a constitutional metaphysician. His special talent, indeed, is not at all in the direction of constitutional metaphysics. He has, rather, sound common sense and a keen perception of practical necessities. He is not an orator, but a speech from him of any length is now an event of note in Parliament, for it is sure to be marked by his great constructive power,—a rare and valuable talent fitted for higher uses than mere exchange of controversy and retort across the chamber. On such occasions his speech gathers in volume and force as it proceeds, and his voice, which is always sonorous, full and varied, can become at times musical and deep.

He is more successful when he speaks from his place in the House than when he makes election addresses in a political campaign. After the session of Parliament, in 1886, he made a tour in Ontario in company with Sir John Macdonald, Hon. Thomas White, then

Minister of the Interior, and Hon. George E. Foster, at that time Minister of Marine and Fisheries. His speech in the debate on the execution of Louis Riel had made him vastly popular throughout Ontario; and though, as a speaker, he is perhaps too self-contained and deliberate to thoroughly arouse such audiences as he addressed during the campaign, the interest and enthusiasm about him increased constantly during the tour.

The stump, however, will never be his proper pedestal. He has not the gifts of the popular orator, and is quite without that shrewd assurance of speech upon the stump which comes from long familiarity with the caucus and all the machinery of politics, public and secret. He does not seem to hold it the finest thing in the world that admiring multitudes should put cheers for comas to his sentences. What it is to address hostile multitudes, readier with groans than with cheers, he would have known, had he made another tour of Ontario after the session of Parliament of 1891, during which he made, in reply to D'Alton McCarthy, his memorable defence of the refusal of the Government to disallow the Jesuits' Estates Act of the Legislature of the province of Quebec. At the close of that speech, before the applause of the Ministerialists had ceased, Mr. Edward Blake crossed the floor of the chamber, and congratulated the Minister of Justice upon what has undoubtedly been his finest effort and his greatest success in Parliament. As an argument of sustained power, it surpassed the speech in the Riel debate, and carried the Government safely through another crisis.

At the last general elections, on March 5th, 1891, he was again returned to represent Antigonish in the House of Commons. The election campaign, which was destined to be the last of the many through which Sir John Macdonald led his forces to face the fortunes of political warfare at the polls, was contested stubbornly in all parts of the Dominion, and Sir John Thompson, who had come to be regarded among the strategy of the old Field Marshal's generals, bore a distinguished share of its hardships and labours.

The Minister of Justice owes his knighthood to the services which he rendered during the negotiation of the Chamberlain-Bayard Fishery Treaty, in 1887. He, in company with Sir Charles Tupper, went to Washington as the legal adviser of the British Plenipotentiaries, and prepared for them their briefs. The volumi-

ous reports he had previously prepared upon the various questions of an International character which had arisen in connection with the Atlantic Fisheries had already received high commendation from Her Majesty's Government. In recognition of his valuable assistance on this occasion, Her Majesty conferred on him the Cross of St-Michael-and-St-George, in August, 1888. It should be said also that he was appointed Queen's Counsel in May, 1879, and that he was called to the Bar of Ontario in 1890.

It is not needed that mention should be made in this place of the many statutes prepared by Sir John Thompson, which have become law under his supervision, to the great benefit of public and private interests. Every session since he has been Minister of Justice, he has brought before Parliament a large volume of new legislation. His amendments to the banking laws and his constant revision of the criminal law may be specially noted as of great public advantage. In connection with the copyright question, he went to England, in 1890, and laid before the Home Government the argument in behalf of the Canadian Government in an able memorandum, addressed to Lord Knutsford, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The Copyright Act, to protect the interests of Canadian publishers in respect to foreign copyrights, was passed by the Dominion Parliament in the preceding year, and still awaits the concurrence of the Home Government before it is declared law in Canada.

The death of Sir Barnez Peacock, not many months ago, suggested, both in England and in this country, some discussion of the claims of Canada to representation on the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, which is the final Court of Appeal for all the colonies within the British Empire; and, both in England and in Canada, the suggestion that a Canadian be raised to that dignity seemed to meet with no small measure of approval. If a Canadian were to be so elevated, it would be Sir John Thompson *aut nullus*, providing, of course, his sense of public duty allowed him to retire from his high place in Parliament. That in the event of so great an honour being held out to him, the choice he would make would be to remain where he is, seems the more probable at the present time, because the more demanded by the inevitable logic of the political position, now that, after being summoned by His Excellency the Governor-General, on the death of Sir John Macdonald, and having tendered the advice

that Mr. Abbott be asked to stand at the head of the new Ministry, he is the leader of the House of Commons, with Mr. Abbott sitting in the Senate as Premier. We are now in a period of transition. The old order change. Whatever the future may hold in store, Sir John Thompson will assuredly exercise a great influence in shaping the development of the national life of the Dominion. The Canadian people are confident that, if a political crisis comes, he will do no public act from any private motive, but that he will speak and act sincerely, and that his sincerity will not be borne of the moment, to be succeeded by a different sincerity the next, but will be founded on the belief that the affairs of the Dominion should be administered on settled principles, and the belief, too, in the right of the people to pass judgment upon the Government, which derives its just authority from the consent of the governed. When, the time comes to sum up his life's work, the future historian will class him with those of her great men whose greatness was that they

Cared not to be great,
But as they saved and served the State.

W. J. FEALY.

Ottawa, October 21st, 1891.

Office of the Minister of Justice,

Ottawa.

April 2nd 1892

Dear Mr. Taché.

Please accept the signature which appears below as the autograph which you desire for your work "Men of the Day".

Yours sincerely

Wm. Thompson

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