

The Legal News.

VOL. V. SEPTEMBER 23, 1882. No. 38.

THE MONTREAL COURT HOUSE.

The exterior of the Montreal Court House looks so imposing and its extent is so great, that the public may be taken by surprise when they learn that it is totally insufficient for the accommodation of the Courts. The truth is that the selection of the design adopted was a gross mistake of the then Department of Public Works. It was seen at the time that the plan was devised without skill, and that a quantity of space had been wasted without object. We have no wish to insist on the mistakes of our predecessors: these remarks are only made to preface the observation that what was scarcely adequate for the wants of 1850 is totally insufficient in 1882. In spite of adaptations and minor improvements, it is now painfully apparent to the judges and the officers of the Courts that some extension of the accommodation is not only desirable but necessary. The Court rooms are insufficient in number, the offices are too small, the vaults are stuffed full, the judges have no privacy in their Chambers, and it is only in the passages there is room.

What is the best way of getting over the difficulty? Bricks and mortar are dangerous allurements for governments, and therefore great caution is requisite before deciding to build. Repairs or alterations of old buildings lead to endless cost and are seldom satisfactory. They have also the disadvantage, if extensive, of requiring a new *habitat* during the operations of transformation. It seems to me, however, that what is required for the Montreal Court House may be carried out with a minimum of these drawbacks.

The most defective portion of the present building is the entrance. The stairs which lead to the great door of the building are so placed as to receive a double avalanche from the roof at each snow storm, and the consequence is that we are reduced to shut up the principal door, and creep in by the vaults, for nearly six months in the year. I would therefore suggest to take down the colonnade, bring it down to a line

with the City Hall, and build up between it and the present building. A space of about 40 feet by 100 feet might thus be gained at a very moderate cost. The present stair-case, which is almost the only handsome part of the building, would be preserved and be easily made available as a mode of communication with the different stories of the addition, and the business of the Courts could be carried on in the meantime without displacement. Objections to this scheme will no doubt present themselves to the critical eye; but I undertake to say that there is none of a serious character or none that cannot be easily overcome by the advice of a good architect. Of course, if the old system of getting the plan from the contractor or builder is followed, excellent masonry may be procured, but an inconvenient building will be the inevitable result. R.

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

BLACKSTONE'S COMMENTARIES, for the use of Students at law and the general reader, by Marshall D. Ewell, LL.D., Professor in the Union College of Law, Chicago.—Publishers, Soule & Bugbee, Boston.

In a compact and convenient little volume of 600 pages, Prof. Ewell has given us the four books of Blackstone. The compression is achieved by leaving out obsolete matter, as well as some portions which are merely historical, explanatory, or argumentative. Leading principles are displayed in full-faced type, and the more important parts of the text are printed in *brevier*, while matter which may be passed over by the student in his first perusal of the work, is printed in a smaller type. The original paging is indicated by figures in brackets, and a few references and explanations are also included in brackets; but, while the exact words of the author have for the most part been preserved, there is no attempt at annotation. In this way, by the exercise of a little ingenuity in economizing space, the student is presented in a small compass with a very fair edition of this standard author, without being embarrassed by many pages of obsolete law. The editor's experience as an instructor of young men entering upon the study of law has no doubt been useful to him in the task of selection and excision. Altogether, this work will be found extremely valuable by those who wish to gain an insight into the English system of law, and the time devoted to its perusal by students in this Province will by no means be lost. The fourth book, "of Public Wrongs," will form a good introduction to the study of criminal law. We feel bound to add a word of commendation of the mechanical execution of the book. The type is unusually clear, and even the portions printed in *nonpareil* may be read with the greatest ease. This student's edition will doubtless supply a want, and become very popular.