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21st MARCH, 1891.



The Late Mr. Lesperance.

Canadian literature has suffered a heavy blow in the death of MR. LESPERANCE; this journal especially mourns his loss, for in him we have lost our first editor. The vivid impress of his style is richly scattered throughout the early numbers and in itself alone constitutes no inconsiderable portion of his best literary work. The literary jottings and quaint fancies to be found in the column entitled "Red and Blue Pencil" are peculiarly those of the gifted author of "Ephemerides," and are of equal merit to those in that now famous column. We draw the attention of our readers to MR. LIGHTHALL'S biographical sketch of the deceased gentleman, to be found in another column.

The New Orleans Tragedy.

Much has been written in the Canadian and English press condemnatory of the illegal shooting of Italian prisoners at New Orleans. It is quite possible to overdo this expression of disapproval. The facts of the case are simple. A branch of one of the most vicious secret societies in the world has existed in that city for a number of years, and has been the instigator of a large number of murders; not only so, but it has inspired such terror among those cognizant of the facts, or actual witnesses of the bloody deeds, that fear of similar treatment has either compelled them to flee the country, or to perjure themselves when put in the witness-box. That this society was composed of Italians has nothing to do with the question. They had chosen to come to the United States to make that country their home, and, even if they had not taken the oath of allegiance, the objects and results of their society placed them in the position of direct violators of the law. Numberless murders had been committed by order of the Mafia and under its sanction, and in scarcely a single instance had the assassin been brought to justice. Finally a prominent and energetic civic officer, an American, was killed, and his death clearly traced to this infamous association. The better class of citizens were aroused to a sense of desperation at the sense of being at the mercy of these degraded foreigners; arrests followed, and the whole trend of evidence showed their guilt; when, to the amazement of all, the jury, through intimidation or bribery, declared them innocent. The law had been outraged, not once, but many times, and the law's self-ordained remedies proved powerless to avenge the monstrous offence. A premium on murder would be the result, and no man's life was safe. Some drastic remedy had to be applied; and the shooting of the prisoners, although fearfully indiscriminate, will do much to minimize the power of the Mafia. Secret societies devoted to murder and intimidation are far too many in the United States, and if the law is too weak to deal with them, the people must wipe them out.

The Jury System.

The tragedy brings into prominence the utter uselessness of the jury system in a mixed community. Of the truth of this when dealing with important criminal cases in districts occupied by two or more distinct races, we have many vivid proofs in this Province of Quebec. It is unnecessary to quote chapter and verse; every intelligent being in Montreal can easily call to mind instances of a prisoner whose guilt was apparent to all, but who in spite of direct proof was declared innocent by the dozen of ignorant or partisan men to whose decision the majesty of the law had to bend. National prejudices, fanned into fever heat by the excited appeals of barristers who knew well how to play on all racial and religious feelings, were to those men of far greater moment than the rendering of justice. In other cases, as in New Orleans, and as repeatedly in Ireland, the fears of the juries as to the after results of a verdict have in very many instances resulted in the acquittal of the prisoner known to be guilty, as far as circumstantial evidence can make guilt certain. Such effects of the jury system makes it a travesty on justice. What to propose as a substitute is a grave question; but it is entirely probable that a tribunal of three or five judges would render verdicts far more in accord with the facts of the case than would be given by nine out of ten juries in any district where its inhabitants are divided by sharply-defined lines.

Mobs in American Cities.

The inadequacy of the New Orleans authorities, civic or military, to deal with mobs is painfully shown in the recent stirring events in that city. While many may sympathize with the object sought by the leaders of the crowd, the gathering and its deeds were strictly illegal, and in a well-governed city would not have been permitted, even if it became necessary to invoke the aid of a battery of artillery. Similar mobs for the perpetration of crimes of the grossest description might at any time be gathered, and the extraordinary supineness of the authorities on this occasion might well serve as a pretext for the belief in immunity from danger at future occurrences of a like nature. The laxity or negligence shown on this occasion is the more surprising in view of the many cases of violence and murder committed by armed mobs in various American cities, and which have only been put down by strong military force, and in most cases with loss of many lives. It is therefore most surprising that in a large city like New Orleans, inhabited by a mixed and excitable population, the machinery by which military aid can be granted to the civic power is so out of gear as to be practically useless in cases of emergency.

Liberals vs. Nationalists.

The acute phase now reached of the trouble between the Liberal and National parties in the Province of Quebec bids fair to make the breach a permanent one. This will not be regretted by well-wishers to Canadian interests. The Liberal party is, on the whole, honoured and respected by that large and influential portion of our people who profess that political creed, and has honest respect and often considerable fear from its opponents. But the Nationalist faction when working on the lines laid down when it sprang into existence—is an anachronism in the Canada of today. Based on the execution of LOUIS RIEL, it is made up of creed and race prejudices, and a persistent endeavour to give special prominence to the ideas, language and national proclivities of La Nouvelle France instead of blending all into the national life of the Dominion of Canada. Its result has been to give an unnecessarily better tone to discussions between the two peoples, and to make questions of race privilege and race patronage burning ones on all possible occasions. Its existence as a wing of the Liberal party has been a source of great weakness to that body, and was the cause of the defection of many who had been its most prominent supporters. It can now expect but little sympathy in its troubles.

The Dominion Illustrated Prize Competition, 1891.

QUESTIONS.

SECOND SERIES.

- 7.—Quote mention of a shipwreck on Lake Ontario; give date and particulars.
- 8.—Where is narrated the escape of a prisoner destined to be burnt?
- 9.—Quote the paragraph mentioning a suicide occurring on the stage of a theatre.
- 10.—Give details of the instance cited of a frontier being kept neutral in war?
- 11.—Where is mention made of a new literary organization in a city in the West of England?
- 12.—Quote the expression or expressions relative to the low standard of morality in Buenos Ayres?

NOTE.—All the material necessary for correctly answering the above questions can be found in Nos. 131 to 139 of the "Dominion Illustrated," being the weekly issues for January and February.

The third series of Questions will be given in our issue of 28th March.