

## The Legal News.

Vol. IV.

MAY 7, 1881.

No. 19.

### THE NEW CHIEF JUSTICESHIP.

We are glad to notice, from a bill introduced by the Attorney General, that the suggestion made by Mr. Justice Torrance in a recent letter (p. 58 of this volume) is about to be carried out. The suggestion was that there should be a Chief Justice of the Superior Court for the Montreal division. It is stated that Chief Justice Meredith approves of the proposition, and that the bill has his concurrence. The first Chief Justice, it is understood, will be Mr. Justice Johnson, the senior Judge of the district.

### THE LAW OF LIBEL.

Mr. Irvine is doing a good work in amending and clearing up the obscurities in the law of libel. As the law is now interpreted, the press is placed under restrictions in this Province, which do not exist elsewhere. We have not yet seen the bill introduced by Mr. Irvine, but we understand that a prominent feature of it is to permit the defendant in a libel suit to plead the truth of the charges, and that the publication was made in the interest of the public.

### LEGAL STUDY.

The *American Law Review*, for May, has an instructive article by Mr. Wellman, on admission to the bar. Law students will find it profitable reading. In a further notice of the subject in the same issue, the writer says:—  
 "Many students, even some who have to make their living, are pressed by a great temptation to shirk thorough work, and shrewdly to pick out of the books the things which go a great way both in and out of school, notwithstanding the warning of their teachers that such a method, like a donkey engine, only works where it is carried. Of such students, the rich ones want speedy admission to the bar; the poor ones want business of some sort, and they need to get it soon. Consequently they often yield to the pressure of what they believe to be a necessity, and some of the ablest of them become intellectual vagrants, who give occasion to the saying, that

lawyers can half learn a thing better than anybody else. This fatal facility is rapidly developed in the green wood, and becomes monstrous in the dry. A lawyer of great experience once said, in a conversation about the study of law, 'There is but one chance for a man to get his law, and that is at the beginning.' This is to be taken, of course, with the modifications understood in reasonable conversation. It indicates, however, a fact with which old practitioners have become too familiar, and which, year after year, surprises the aspiring beginners who have trained themselves to study their cases with a certain effort at perfection. It is that the men who, from necessity or choice, began the practice of the law without forcing themselves to take the time and the pains to control their circumstances, whether in riches or poverty, and to undergo long and well-directed labor in examining the authorities, and in considering the established or growing principles which make the life and health of the law as a great factor of civilization, rarely have the requisite pluck afterwards, or having it, rarely find the time to educate themselves over again. It takes intellectual enthusiasm to follow in any profession the example, for instance, of Descartes in philosophy, by surrendering acquired habits of thought, and even well-considered opinions, and beginning at the bottom to learn the rudiments of what, at heart, one knows that he is ignorant. Many fear that it is not worth while to begin again. They surrender. It may not be their fault. Nature may have taken them by surprise and exhausted their youth before they find out that they have a choice in the matter. Nor do we wish even to seem to disparage such men, by suggesting that it is their misfortune. That might be as absurd or as inconsiderate as to take pains to cry out against a poet that he is no mathematician, or against a merchant that he is no scholar. It is simply a fact. It is a fact that many well-known, able and useful practitioners and judges are not, and have never tried to be, thorough lawyers. The fact that they have never tried to be thorough lawyers, is the point which we now urge as the reason why they are not. It is a very simple thing to say; but it is wholesome for candidates for admission to the bar to verify it by examining the briefs and decisions which prove it. They