

question of framing some satisfactory system of providing pensions for the aged, said that "the resources of civilization are not exhausted." He may be right. But the same cannot be said of the patience of those called upon to interpret and free from obscurity many of the clauses of an Act which is proving itself a legal puzzle.

A Funny Fire-Bug.

The New York judge who, on Monday last sentenced Antonio Balletti to ten years in the State Prison, for arson in what is termed the second degree, evidently did not permit his taste for humour to be so tickled as to stifle his sense of the seriousness of the crime of incendiarism. The man who maliciously sets fire to a dwelling-house endangers the lives of its inmates, and for ten long years Balletti will be in seclusion, and able to meditate upon the heinousness of his sin. Yet, we have some slight sympathy with this incendiary, if only because of his ingenious plea in mitigation of a grievous offence and menace to society. Antonio Balletti, according to the report in the paper, is an Italian organ-grinder. In August last he arrived home drunk, and was locked out by his wife. Up to this point the story is a common one, and Balletti is deserving of the little pity usually bestowed upon gentlemen who are thus properly excluded from the presence of their wives. His nationality and occupation have nothing to do with the case, although any one condemned to move from street to street filling the innocent air with the strains of "Sweet Marie" might well be pardoned for trying to drown his sorrows in frothy goblets of Bavarian beer. Even an Englishman has been known to reach home intoxicated, and to exhibit a preference for the hallway as a place of rest rather than to disturb his sleeping wife.

But Balletti's subsequent conduct caused Judge Cowing to say there were no mitigating circumstances in the case, and hence the sentence. The tipsy Italian signified his objection to being locked out by smearing kerosene over the hallway in front of his room, in the tenement, and then lighting it.

When sober, Balletti is evidently a funny fellow, and perhaps he was a capital organ-grinder. But Mr. Justice Cowing declined to accept seriously the statement of this musician from sunny Italy that he started the fire "to show his wife he was about." He is not about now. He is in the State Prison of New York. Poor Balletti.

A Timely Alarm.

History has to do with real occurrences, as distinct from the fictions of imagination, and from abstract conceptions; the former is denominated fable, the latter science. History requires the presence of imagination that the pictures of the past may possess something of the force of the present. But a visit to the battle fields and scenes of the past, the contemplation of monuments raised to the memory of those who have contributed

to the building up of a Dominion, the creation of a vast Empire, is better calculated to stimulate patriotic feeling than the study of history, however attractive it may be made by a gifted imagination. Thus it is that the mere suggestion of selling for building purposes the pride of historic Quebec, the field where the gallant Wolfe fought and died, comes as a shock to those who glory in the history of our past. We do not like the ominous silence of those who are best able to contradict this rumour of contemplated sale of the Plains of Abraham. However, we decline to believe that any such disposition of this bit of almost sacred ground will be permitted so long as any true lover of his country can raise voice or hand to prevent it. In the meantime, this story of old Quebec has flitted eastward across the wintry seas to London, and the Canadian *Gazette* gives the following expression to the surprise of General Wolfe's countrymen:—

In scarcely less degree than Canadians themselves, Englishmen will learn with amazement and incredulity of the possibility that the historic Plains of Abraham may fall into the hands of the speculative builder. It seems that the lease by which the Dominion Government at present holds the site expires three or four years hence, and it is feared that the nuns of the Hotel-Dieu, who own the land, will be sorely tempted to offer it for sale rather than renew the Government's tenancy on the virtually nominal terms at present in force. It is well, no doubt, that a note of alarm should be struck in due time, and that pressure, if needs be, should be brought to bear upon the Government to take steps to secure in perpetuity a site which is linked with one of the great dramatic events in the country's history. But, for our part, we can hardly believe for a moment that the Dominion authorities will not take effective measures to prevent an act of vandalism which would horrify all Canada and Great Britain.

THE MONTREAL CITY CHARTER.

A Committee of Final Revision Wanted.—Some Thoughts about the System of Taxation.

As already suggested in these columns, the proposed new charter should be carefully conned by a small committee of citizens in conjunction with a special committee from the City Council. While admittedly the aldermen represent the city, nevertheless, as this new charter is of vital importance to the future growth of a great city, and will affect the entire community for many years to come, the views of the citizens at large as well as the opinions of those who very properly have examined the charter mainly from the civic government standpoint, should be ascertained, and the united wisdom of both factions be brought to bear in the preparation of the Act to be submitted to parliament for approval of the provincial law-makers.

An invitation extended to bodies of citizens representing certain interests to attend one or two meetings for the discussion of special topics of taxation, and the form of government, is not sufficient, and