

an impartial "divider" between man and man. As for Judges Galt and Gwynne, if they ever had any political views, they have not obtruded them upon the public; at any rate they are far removed above the tainted atmosphere in which faction delights to live and move.

The commutation of Lepine's sentence as so generally expected that its announcement has taken no one by surprise. An attempt is, of course, being made to get up a little factitious indignation on the subject, but it will certainly fail. We have already expressed a very decided opinion that the execution, at this late date, of the actors in the tragedy of 1870 would be a wanton and inexcusable act of bloodshed. Whenever politicians strive, by means of popular clamour, to compass the death of any man solely in the interests of party, governments do well to interpose the Royal prerogative between the agitators and the culprit. There has been rebellion in Canada before, and it is not forgotten that two victims were hurried to the scaffold with unseemly haste in 1838, whom no one would have thought of hanging three or four years afterwards. The *quasi* judicial murder of Thomas Scott was utterly indefensible; the only plea in extenuation of the useless crime that could bear a moment's serious consideration was the excited and fevered state of both parties at the time. It must be borne in mind, however, that there are other elements to be taken into account besides the naked fact of the crime itself. Archbishop Taché was sent up to Red River to make what terms he thought fit. It is true that the shooting of Scott had not then taken place; but that is beside the point. The Roman Catholic prelate was endowed with plenary powers, and he exercised them in such a way as virtually to condone the offence. Moreover, as if that were not enough, Lieutenant-Governor Archibald subsequently confirmed the Archbishop's action by receiving Riel and

accepting his services on behalf of the Crown. The hanging of even the arch-rebel, under these circumstances, could only be paralleled from English history by the execution of Raleigh notwithstanding that he had been in the King's employment during the period which intervened between the alleged crime and its punishment. The only objection which can fairly be urged against the commutation of Lepine's sentence is the way in which it was effected. To our view, and we believe it is the view of every unprejudiced person in the Dominion, the course taken by Mr. Mackenzie is entitled, if not to hearty approval, at least to indulgent consideration, under the peculiar difficulties of the case. In any Cabinet, whether constructed by Mr. Mackenzie or by Sir Jno. A. Macdonald, serious differences of opinion would be inevitable on this troublesome question. These dissensions could not be obtruded upon public attention otherwise than by a complete break-up of the Administration. The Privy Council is not a legislative body in which each member may publicly record his vote *pro* or *contra*; it must exist as a unit or cease to exist at all. Each individual minister is obliged to surrender his private opinion to the voice of the Premier and the majority or resign; nay more, he must be prepared to defend in Parliament and on the hustings the Government policy, whatever it may be. Perhaps it will be said that honourable men would retire rather than occupy so false a position; but would that be a solution of the difficulty? It is quite certain that no Government could be formed that would give satisfaction to the two Provinces. The French Canadian population will be content with nothing short of a full amnesty and a free pardon; and no Ontario member, west of Kingston at any rate, would dare to entertain such a proposition. It might be as well, therefore, if Opposition journals, before being pharisaically severe on Mr. Mackenzie, would be kind enough to inform the public how