

least to hint that the proof would have failed in a court of justice, if the aggressors had been checked when the first proposal was made. To say so is merely to say that the witnesses were not credible, and that the more reliable testimony was required.

To defend the act on the ground that the Ministry were justified by the instinct of self-preservation, is simply to assert that party exigencies produce good morals. People of that creed will defend the episodes of "send along another ten thousand;" "make a big push;" and "speak now;" and people of that creed must also first show that it is a matter of expediency, and one for the good of society, that a Party Government should be maintained at all hazards. That is placing the matter on a purely political basis, which is entirely foreign to the scope of this discussion. A reference was made in the first article on this subject, which was intended to show the difference between the use of decoys to detect the commission of offences against property, such as larceny, and their use in the detection of offences against the person. The reference was not thoroughly understood. Let us, however, accept Mr. Griffin's example of a virtuous woman who, being solicited on the street by an infamous scoundrel, led him to her father's house where he received his due reward.

The reference to an actual case prevents one from enquiring (without fear of personal offence) whether such a woman's self-possession did not exceed her modesty, whether her own fair reputation or the punishment of the offender were uppermost in her mind, and where she learned the strumpet's act so well as to completely deceive, and decoy into a house "an infamous scoundrel," without being even suspected of being a virtuous woman. In order to make the case more nearly like the one under discussion, we must intensify it. Suppose such a woman to have simulated consent, to have invited a repetition of the advances, and under her father's instructions to have led on the aggressor until he had left undoubted and inefaceable evidence of his guilt. Will any one pretend to say that the moral tone of both father and daughter would not have been lowered? A virtuous woman does not hold out her honour for sale, even if she does not intend to part with it, neither does an honourable man.

To say that there is an irreparable injury done in the one case and not in the other is simply to say that a man's honour may be trifled with, a woman's may not. And to say that the injury done to the member who took the money is not irreparable, is begging the question. That depends entirely upon the morality or immorality of the transaction, and is the very thing to be demonstrated. If the offenders had been enticed within reach of the authorities of the House as soon as the approach was made, and had been there and then approached and punished by the House, their case would have been the exact parallel of Mr. Griffin's illustration. But as it stands it is not.

If the alleged conspiracy had been a conspiracy to assault and beat Mr. McKim with sticks, and he had informed the police, and if the police had told him to let the conspirators proceed until they had belaboured him sufficiently to have left undoubted evidence of their assault, will any reasoning man say that Mr. McKim would have consented to this in the interests of justice and for the good of society? The fact that a man will allow his honour to be tampered with, when he will not submit his body to blows, proves nothing more nor less than that his honour is made of tougher material than his bones.

It has been argued that the acceptance of the money had not the effect of debauching or corrupting the acceptor; that, though honour was held up for sale, honour was not in reality sold. We have now the aid of the decision of a court of justice upon this branch of the case. It has been decided that the money received by Mr. McKim is his property (we question if the right to coerce the Speaker to hand it over to Mr. McKim's creditors is left open). The decision proceeded upon well understood principles of law: that, where a man conveys property to another for an immoral—not necessarily a criminal—purpose, the title to the property passes to that person, and it becomes his absolutely. He can only be divested of it with his consent, or *in invitum* by process of law at the suit of his creditors. On this principle the money given to Mr. McKim cannot be recovered back and must therefore belong to him. Will any apostle of purity, who alleges that Mr. McKim's moral tone has not been lowered, will any such an one tell us what Mr. McKim, an honourable man, has given in exchange for the money which he received?

It may be well to disclaim any intention to defend the accused, or their action. They have their counsel, and they are in the hands of justice. Reference to their case has been studiously avoided, and the course adopted by THE WEEK in refusing to discuss their case while it is before the courts cannot be too highly commended. Criticism of the mode of detection is not a defence, and cannot be distorted into a defence of the accused or of their act.

E. DOUGLASS ARMOUR.

IS IT DECADENCE?

WE sometimes see a little child of a few years old smitten with atrophy. Food fails to nourish it. The flesh, as it were, evaporates from the feeble limbs, and the babe's face gradually assumes a look of extreme age. Such is the aspect of the intellectual life of Canada. It seems old in infancy, and withered before it bloomed.

Some twelve or fifteen years ago Canadian journalism reached the nadir of debasement. Owing to causes which it is not necessary to particularize, in time a marked improvement took place, and, coincident with this appeared signs of a general intellectual awakening, which, to people who loved an ignoble power more than national progress, was gall and worm-wood. It was not uncommon then to find in ephemeral literature evidences of mental vigour, fulness of knowledge, and independent thought. Young Canada marched forward in what seemed the light and life of a larger day. Much there was to stir a generous mind with admiration, much to inspire and justify sanguine hopes. What blight fell on this out-budding? Where are the flowers, where the fruit we should have seen? Were the movements as of life the result of external influences? Were they rather galvanic than organic? Be they what they might, nothing can be more certain than that stagnation speedily followed those manifestations of real or apparent, of inborn or factitious, energy. As in all human affairs, source and stream in this degenerate age of our history are so mingled as almost to defy analysis; the pure effect of one day becomes an efficient cause on that which follows, and to appraise the influence of any person or event is as difficult as to define the boundary line between the realms of free-will and fate.

Among the phenomena which have accompanied this decline stands, in offensive prominence, that which might well seem to be its main cause—a marked falling off in the quality of the writing in our leading journals. But though this can be immediately traced to the employment of a lower and lighter kind of ability, at the dictation of commercial or political considerations or of both, and though in a country where newspapers are so universally read, it is hard to exaggerate the moulding power of the press, we are inclined to class the want of freshness, the reliance on detraction, the evident preference of abuse to argument, among consequences rather than causes. Had the intellectual life of Canada been vigorous it would have thrown off the infection. But the fount of our inspiration, it is to be feared, was shallow. Once antagonized by material interests, enthusiasm grew pale, and the light which lit us for a space soon burned so low that hardly a glimmer or spark remains. The fact is, the sturdy spirit which can live for an idea, and if necessary go into the wilderness with it, has not yet been acclimatized with us. Here is something for national searching of heart; because, until that spirit is ours, real greatness, individual or national, is a star in a distant sphere, beyond our grasp, beyond even a first conception of what it is. Had the ardour of those hopeful years burned on, men who are now in middle age, common-place "dollar-getters and breeders of dollar-getters," would have grown into figures of moral and intellectual excellence; society would have a depth and glow and sparkle, only conspicuous by their absence to-day; politics themselves would have had at least to assume a virtue; and the rising generation would be entering active life with more inspiring thoughts than cynicism and an eye for the main chance can supply.

We shall be glad if time proves that we take too gloomy a view of the situation. When to the despondent prophet all seemed unrelieved wickedness in Israel, there were yet seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal; and it is possible that what we deplore may prove part of a progressive undulation, not a section of a depraved curve. It may be that flame will again burst forth and the light be brighter than before. The reflux wave may rush forward and register a higher mark. Otherwise the future is indeed a dreary prospect. Scepticism, which involves Canada with the rest of the world, is apt to make people think that there is nothing for which it is worth while either to live or die. Our peculiar position relying on a distant arm for defence is not conducive to heroism of any kind. The most prominent and, at the same time, most useless of our institutions fosters flunkeyism and false displays, while making the dude the ideal of fashionable manhood. A democratic people, with no great private estates, with no conditions whatever to set one section of the community apart from, and above the rest, and with only common red blood in our veins, we have an exotic Court planted afresh at intervals, the officers of which are invariably the rump of the young lordling class, and a bastard aristocracy, with tin-foil decorations, looking for favours, not to the people of Canada, but to the decrepid trunk of feudalism beyond the sea. The mode of conducting political controversy in and out of parliament declares war against mental progress. To change a man's opinion is