

of a theory which, however much it may benefit the individual, is supposed to be opposed to the interest of the great masses of society. In England the other day, when the highest legal functionary in the realm was supposed in some slight degree to have sullied the brightness of his escutcheon—he was forced by the pressure of public opinion to resign. Well, this agent for the sale of Crown Lands was active to a certain extent in his vocation, for he disposed of large portions of the Crown Domain, but as he forgot to return the monies, and neglected in many cases to make returns of any kind, it so fell out—it is alleged—that his successor disposed of some of these lots to other parties, so that the original purchasers were defrauded not only of their money but of the land. These men are possessed by a not unreasonable curiosity to understand how it came about that they were thus defrauded. They know the man who has despoiled them, but they do not see him in what they conceive to be his proper position. They do not see him clad with the variegated garb of the out-laws of society, but clothed in the judicial ermine. He smiles upon them blandly from the bench. These men are placed in a singularly cruel position. They cannot appeal to the courts of law, for the man whom they would arraign sits in the judgment seat, and therefore it is that, having no other recourse, they appeal to the justice of this House.

“Apart from the sins of omission and commission with which Judge Lafontaine has been charged with being guilty, there is the fact, which is notorious, of his utter incompetency. So patent are his deficiencies, that Judge Lafontaine and his decisions have become a mockery and a byword throughout the whole length and breadth of the district of Ottawa. That district is somewhat peculiarly situated. Owing to its configuration and to its peculiar resources and trade, there is induced within its borders a class of active, adventurous, enterprising, but at all times reckless men, who sometimes require to be restrained by the strong arm of the law. Under these circumstances a judge should take the lead in making the laws understood and respected. He should be a man of energy and firmness of

character; one whose decisions would be received with respect, and whose personal character would inspire confidence. Such a judge, in such a district, would be of incalculable benefit to the country. Unfortunately, we have a man who is the very reverse of this ideal. Timid in his instincts, indolent in his habits, knowing that he is an object of contempt and derision, and conscious that he is deserving of the last measure of contempt, he plods doggedly on, biding his time, and awaiting that avenging Nemesis which sooner or later is sure to overtake him. His decisions are a mixture of the grotesque and the horrible. I was present at one trial for murder, presided over by Mr. Justice Lafontaine, and I trust that I may never again witness such a scene. The prisoner was a miserable cripple—one, unfortunately, whose antecedents did not weigh in his favor when the balance for life and death came to be struck. The offence had been committed only a few days before the trial, and the popular mind was consequently strongly excited against the unhappy man. Repulsive in appearance—ignorant almost to idiocy—he was one to whom, from his very helplessness, the utmost impartiality should have been manifested. Against him was arrayed one of the most brilliant orators and accomplished lawyers in the country. The counsel for the defence, although they did all in their power, and I am satisfied did all that men could do to save the life of the unhappy man, yet labored under singular disadvantages. The Court House was filled by an excited crowd strongly prejudiced against the prisoner. It was evident to every intelligent observer that the man was surely doomed—that one man only stood between the unhappy prisoner and eternity, and that man was the presiding judge. A clear analysis of the evidence—a calm exposition of the facts of the case—a charge such as we have a right to expect from a British judge in a British colony, might have saved the life of the unhappy man. I never shall forget the thrill of horror and disgust which ran through my heart when that charge was actually delivered. The last plank was struck away; the man was as surely doomed as though the last office of the law had been performed. It must be