

The Legal News.

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The beginning of the legal year in the Province of Quebec has been marked by important changes in the constitution of the bench. The office of Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench had been vacant for more than three months, and, as the September term drew near, some anxiety was felt by the bar as to whether an appointment would be made before the Court met on the 15th. Moreover it was well known that serious and much-to-be-regretted illness would prevent Mr. Justice Church from taking his seat; and it was also understood that Mr. Justice Tessier was far from being well, and was contemplating retirement. This left but three justices out of six, and one of the three—Mr. Justice Cross—was then engaged in holding the criminal term. In these circumstances the bar of Montreal held a meeting on the 12th September, at which a resolution was passed, calling for a reconstitution of the Court on a permanent basis. The appointment of temporary judges was protested against, and this was not without good ground, it being manifestly unsatisfactory that the result of an appeal should depend, as not seldom happened, on the opinion of an *ad hoc* judge taken from an inferior Court, when the other judges were equally divided. The majority of the advocates present at the meeting considered it preferable that the appeal term should be postponed until October, rather than that they should proceed with their cases before an incomplete or temporarily constituted tribunal. Notwithstanding this protest there was not a quorum of judges when the Court opened on the 15th September, Justices Baby and Bossé alone being available for the hearing of cases. There was not a quorum on the following day, and it was not until the 17th that the Honorable Alex. Lacoste, the new Chief Justice, took his seat. Mr. Lacoste, as Speaker of the Senate, had presided at the meeting of that body at Ottawa on the afternoon of the 15th, and was sworn in, and took

his seat as Chief Justice at Montreal on the morning of the 17th, so that no time was lost by him after his appointment.

Of the gentleman called to the succession of the late Sir Antoine Dorion, it is hardly necessary to say more than that the general opinion of those who are best qualified to judge pointed to him as the fittest occupant of the vacant chair. Mr. Lacoste, though not yet fifty years of age, has, for more than a dozen years past, filled a very prominent place at the bar and in political life, and his abilities were universally recognized as of a very high order. As an advocate he was certainly one of the most polished and pleasing speakers to be found at the bar, not merely of the province of Quebec, but of the whole Dominion. He has been constantly occupied of late years with cases of the greatest difficulty and importance. His *confrères* were so anxious to avail themselves of his assistance as a counsel that he must have found it difficult to give sufficient attention to the business of his own firm. It was feared at first that Mr. Lacoste would not be willing to make the great pecuniary sacrifice involved in relinquishing a lucrative practice for the meagre emolument of a Chief Justice; but, happily for the public, the choice was made, and the bench has gained an ornament for whom no fitting substitute could easily have been found.

Another notable event of the month is the resignation of Mr. Justice Tessier. The learned Judge's service in the Court of Queen's Bench had exceeded fifteen years, his appointment dating from 8th Oct., 1875. As a Judge Mr. Justice Tessier has been distinguished for courtesy, dignity, fairness and impartiality. He has enjoyed the esteem of his colleagues and of the bar in a marked degree, and his resignation, which is due to advancing years and declining health, will be generally regretted.

Mr. Justice Tessier's successor has been chosen from the bar of Quebec city. Mr. Jean Blanchet has been well known as an able advocate, and a few years ago, on the retirement of Mr. Taillon from the leadership