

The Legal News.

Vol. III. MARCH 27, 1880. No. 13.

DECENTRALIZATION.

In a pamphlet on "Notre Système Judiciaire," noticed in a recent issue, the author, though a staunch supporter of the system of decentralization, and eager for a further extension of it, depicts as follows the existing condition of things in the rural districts:—

"Aujourd'hui, on peut dire que chaque district a sa jurisprudence locale; un juge décide une question dans un sens, dans un district, et son collègue, dans le district voisin, décide la même question dans un sens diamétralement opposé."

This is probably only too true, and it is the natural fruit of a system which isolates the Judges of the Superior Court, and allows each one to build up a jurisprudence after his own fancy within the precincts of his allotted district. The author imagines that a remedy might be found in bringing three Judges together, to hear and decide each case in the country districts. Even if this proposition were practicable, it would not touch the grievance. Each section into which the country might be divided in order to obtain the necessary quota of Judges, would have its own jurisprudence, just as each separate district has now, and the uncertainty and confusion would evidently be no whit less than at present.

GRAND JURIES.

We see that a bill has been introduced in the Commons by Mr. Coursol, one of the members for Montreal, to enable grand juries to be dispensed with in the Province of Quebec, except in capital cases. The preamble states that an investigation before a grand jury in the majority of cases has been shown by experience to be unnecessary. We are not aware that any representation to this effect has been made to Government by the judges of the Court of Queen's Bench, and on a question of this importance the opinion of the judges should certainly be invited before anything is done. But apart from the merits of the grand jury system,

there is an objection to the sectional character of the proposed legislation. Why should grand juries be abolished in Quebec and retained in all the other provinces of the Dominion?

THE LATE MR. A. ROBERTSON, Q.C.

The bar of Montreal, in common with the lay community, has sustained the loss of several prominent members during the past few weeks. The last of these afflictions has been felt to be almost a personal bereavement by his professional brethren, for there were few more generally esteemed and loved than the late Mr. Andrew Robertson. The deceased gentleman, as appears by the list for the Montreal district, was actually the oldest actively practising advocate of the section, the names which precede his being those of gentlemen who have withdrawn from active duties at the bar. No one, however, looked upon Mr. Robertson as likely to be soon incapacitated by age or infirmity for the work in which he had so long taken a leading part. He was a veteran who had seen much service, but until recently he retained all the energy of youth, and he died in harness after only a week's illness.

Mr. Robertson, who was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, was a student in the office of Judge Day, and commenced practice in 1841, at the age of 26. About five-and-twenty years ago he removed from Sherbrooke to Montreal, where he practised with great success as head of the firm of A. & W. Robertson. He was also associated with the late Judge Beaudry in the preparation of the Lower Canada Reports. In 1864 he published a digest of the reported decisions up to that date. Mr. Robertson was entirely devoted to his profession, and never suffered his attention to be diverted to political pursuits. Probably for that reason he never attained a position on the bench, while less capable juniors were appointed. He was also fond of literature, his acquaintance with which was very extensive. Some years ago, he experienced a failure of eyesight in consequence of too close application, and was obliged to cross the Atlantic to consult eminent oculists in London. In the end, the sight of one eye was lost, and this misfortune appeared to have affected his health, though he retained his good spirits and genial mood to the last. Mr. Rob-