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THE TIMES.

Having heard that M. Dugas, P.M., had taken very considerable umbrage at my remarks anent his occasional lack of dignity in Court, and looseness in the matter of discipline, I thought it only right and fair to go myself to the Court, so that I might be able to judge from personal observation whether I had spoken too severely or not. On Tuesday I went. Entering the room M. Dugas gave me half a bow, and that half very cold, and invited me to take a chair. Quite as much as I had a right to expect, and which I accepted with an expression of joy and gratitude. I sat and looked on; then stood awhile, interfering with no one. M. Dugas was perfectly dignified—indeed, there were times when he looked worthy of promotion. I am not referring to the times when he was speaking. The men accused in the MacNamee robbery were there for preliminary investigation. Matters went on swimmingly; the slow work of examining a witness was being slowly got through; the chief constable and another subordinate in the Court seemed to get immense fun out of something, for they talked hard and laughed harder; when, lo! from the clear sky a storm. It was sudden; it was appalling.

What was it? Where had it come from? What wreck would result? It came out. Mr. Keller, counsel for two of the men, had discovered an enterprising photoist taking sketches of the accused through the window; to which he very properly made instant objection. I thought the point very well taken and cleverly put, and when Mr. Keller planted himself at the very window in order to deprive the artist of the opportunity of doing any further work by the light of nature, and then turned the men's faces about the other way, the chief constable's protest to the contrary notwithstanding, I admired him immensely. But, O me miserum! my turn had come. His Honour, the P.M., made several allusions to newspaper criticism, evidently intending that I should understand the reference—which I did, and made a note of accordingly. But that was only a little preliminary skirmishing. M. Archambault rose to his feet—literally he rose to only one, for the other was handily put on the chair, whether as a rest for his elbow or his chin, or to protect the chair, I could not tell—and poured out a most remarkable speech. He accused the public and press of undue interference—accused the Magistrate of being prejudiced against the prisoners—said that the work of examination was being stopped or retarded by the people, who ought not to be there, and ended by demanding that His Honour send all the uninterested out of Court. Which His Honour did. Once more I bowed to the majesty of the law, and retired, along with the other gentleman who formed with me the "public" under consideration.

M. Dugas followed us, however, to explain that he had to do this in order to carry out the terms of the law. By reference to the Statute we soon saw that this was left entirely to the discretion of the presiding Magistrate. He can exclude strangers at any time that he may think proper. When this was pointed out, M. Dugas seemed to relent, and expressed his willingness to make an exception in my favour; which courtesy I courteously declined. So far good. It will readily

be understood that there are occasions when in the interests of justice it is needful that the preliminary enquiry shall be conducted with closed doors. But there is a mode of doing these things which is fair and not offensive. What had occurred to bring about this change in the programme? Nothing in the world but the discovery of the artist by the lawyer—and that could have nothing to do with the two or three visitors in the room. They were not talking to witnesses nor to prisoners, nor in any way disturbing the gentle flow of legal life. The only reason given was that the P. M. was being influenced by outside opinion and remarks, which opinion and remarks originated with those who visited the Court. True, M. Archambault hinted that this was because the P. M. is in possession of a heart, but that counted in, surely the thing was extraordinary. I never before heard of a Court being cleared in order that the judge might maintain the balance of justice with a strict, impartial hand; nor do I think that M. Dugas needed such protection. There must have been some other cause which M. Archambault did not explain.

Why these examinations should be conducted in private I do not see. As I have said, the interests of justice may sometimes demand it, but that can only happen now and then. Why should not these men be looked upon? Why should not the evidence be heard? Newspaper criticism upon them would be out of place and indecorous, but it is not at all likely that the Press would commit itself to anything so detrimental to the administration of law and order. Crime and crookedness want closed doors, but justice seeks light and investigation. Suppose the accused should be photographed, what would happen? If they be convicted, some curious people will have portraits of men dishonest outside the circle of their own friends; and if they be found innocent, those same curious will have portraits of men accused and acquitted; that is all. And I would suggest to M. Dugas: first, that a little more decorum on the part of his subordinates would improve the appearance of the court; second, that he do not turn people out when once admitted, unless there is good reason for it; and third, that he ask the authorities for a bigger and better room, that the public may attend if they wish (always allowing that there are special cases), and also for one or two short-hand writers, that the examinations may be carried on more rapidly.

The manner in which the examinations are carried on now is a machine admirably adapted for wasting time and puzzling a witness. The words are taken down in long and slow hand, during the writing of which the examining lawyer has a chance to induce the witness to alter them occasionally. Then comes a long pause, and then the sentence is read over by the writer of the long and slow hand in a very pronounced French accent, which often puzzles witnesses and criminals not accustomed to the bewildering beauties of English prose set to French music. It is this inevitable slowness that induces the lack of decorum in the court. If the subordinates had work to do, or could watch work being done, so as to be interested, it would mend their manners. I suggest this meantime, but it seems to me that still more radical changes could be made in the public interest, to which I will refer again.

The summer strikes have begun in real earnest. Hochelaga led off, Valleyfield came next, and now Quebec has followed in a tragic earnestness, and it looks as if this is only the beginning of a series of such outbreaks. Every indication goes to show that the coming summer will witness a great and general disturbance in the labour market. The "boom" has been exaggerated, and that is the root of the difficulty. The workingmen imagine times are much better than