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In this issue we commence Victor Hugo's new novel,

## NINETY-THREE,

which is admitted by the best critics to be, next to "Les  
Misérables,"

### The Greatest of this Author's Productions.

The scene of this remarkable story is laid in France  
during the first Revolution. The book abounds in power-  
ful descriptions and sketches of

## The War of La Vendee,

AND OF

### Paris During the Reign of Terror.

The story will run through about twenty numbers of  
the News, and will be succeeded by another live attrac-  
tion.

## Canadian Illustrated News.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, MAY 30, 1874.

### POLITICAL RETROSPECT.

There is a phase of the political situation which must  
not be lost sight of. The present administration came  
into power with the distinct and emphasized pledge  
that their mission was to inaugurate an era of radical re-  
form. Mr. BLAKE struck the key note and sounded the  
watchword when he made the proud declaration: "We  
represent the party of purity." And throughout the ses-  
sion this pretence has been ostentatiously kept up by  
constant and pointed references to the delinquencies of  
the late Government. We have several times taken oc-  
casion to say, and we again insist, that the Liberals must  
be held sternly to their word. It will not suffice for them  
to revile their fallen adversaries. They must prove to  
the country that they themselves are pure and thorough-  
ly disinterested in the exercise of power. They succeeded  
to the Administration under unexceptionably favourable  
circumstances. The Pacific Scandal lay upon the public  
conscience like a great shadow of blight. Reform was  
universally and imperatively called for. The people were  
prepared to give their utmost trust to new men who pro-  
mised to govern them according to a code of honesty,  
magnanimity and single-hearted patriotism. All that Mr.  
MACKENZIE's friends had to do was to act up to this popular  
call and they were sure to command and retain popular ap-  
preciation. Have they done so? We do not care to enter into  
particulars at present. The time for such an examination  
has not yet come. But this much we will say—six months  
have passed, the session has drawn to a close and there  
is a vague indistinct feeling prevalent that we have fallen  
pretty much into the old ways. There have been crimina-  
tions and recriminations: a rude and, at times, a dictato-  
rial spirit has been manifested in high places; abrupt  
dismissals have been made; strange appointments have  
taken place; ominous reticences have been observed;  
election frauds have been revealed; party spirit has  
raged loud and acrimonious as in the worst of the ancient  
days. Somehow all this looks very little like that great  
transformation which we had been promised. We realize  
indeed, that there has been a change of men, but we fail  
to see a change of system. So far, reformation, and regen-  
eration are not forthcoming. For ourselves, we are not  
particularly surprised. We predicted just this result, six  
months ago, when the new Ministry was announced. We  
then stated that if it was made up of the old party hacks  
of the Opposition it would accomplish no salient, no per-  
manent political ameliorations. We called upon Mr.  
BLAKE and Mr. MACKENZIE—men in whose thorough hon-  
esty we have every confidence—to lay aside their own  
partisan feelings, assume a broad policy, and surround

themselves by new men, men of post-confederate, not  
ante-confederate reputation, who were not weighted by  
the trammels of effete and anti national Rougeism, on  
the one hand, nor by the shackles of sectional Grittism, on  
the other. It was only thus that a generous, spontaneous,  
fresh, manly and straightforward public spirit, distinct  
from the harsh bigotries engendered by twenty years of  
warfare on mere provincial issues, could be generated.  
No such "new departure" was taken and the result is  
that vague feeling of disappointment which we have sig-  
nalized. If the same course continues to be pursued,  
there is no doubt whatever that this feeling will ripen  
with time into open manifestations of disgust. What takes  
place at Ottawa is unfortunately repeated elsewhere. In  
this city a trial is going on wholly among members of the  
Liberal party, arising out of alleged electoral frauds. Pend-  
ing the trial, we have no intention to enter into the  
merits of the case, but we cannot help referring to the  
remarkable circumstance of one of these gentlemen being  
sued for libel, on account of letters published professedly  
to expose these frauds. With the advanced opinions of  
this gentleman, social, religious or even political, we  
have scant sympathy, but we happen to know from per-  
sonal observation of him during his several appearances  
in public capacities, that he is a sincere liberal believer in  
electoral reform among the mass of voters, and we make  
no doubt that whatever he speaks or writes on this sub-  
ject is meant to further that consummation. Now, what-  
ever may be the issue of the trial, this gentleman will  
certainly have his eyes opened, and he will learn to his  
own cost that the requirements of "party" often lead to  
the abandonment, on the part of the chiefs, of the dear-  
est and most sacred principles. We sincerely regret this  
aspect of affairs. The Liberal party has a golden oppor-  
tunity to deserve well of the country and maintain itself  
in power for years. It is not too late to take a bold  
position on its own platform and pursue a policy of large  
statesmanship and Spartan purity. We trust it will do  
so without further delay.

### THE POPE-MACDONALD LETTER.

The mystery that surrounded the abstraction of the  
Pope Macdonald letter has finally been cleared up. A  
clerk in the Militia Office at Montreal, by name THOMAS  
BOYES, has confessed, in a letter addressed to the Secre-  
tary of the Post Office Enquiry Commission, that on the  
2nd of September last he received with the mail for the  
office in which he was employed, a letter addressed to  
the Hon. J. H. POPE. Observing that the letter, which  
was open at the time it came into his hands, was franked  
with the name of the Deputy Minister of Justice, he  
concluded that the contents were of a political nature,  
and made himself acquainted with them. Considering  
that Mr. YOUNG was unfairly treated, he forwarded the  
letter to that gentleman. The rest of the story is well  
known. Boyes, however, entirely exculpates both Mr.  
YOUNG and Mr. PALMER from any knowledge of the  
matter. As far as the former gentleman was concerned  
the exculpation was hardly necessary. No one with the  
exception of some few of the most rabid of his political  
enemies ever believed that he was guilty either of com-  
mitting, or of abetting so grave a crime as the mis-appro-  
priation of a letter intended for another person. But  
Mr. PALMER has not been so fortunate. Not only has  
he been deprived of his situation in the Post Office, but  
he has been assailed on all sides by the most unjust accu-  
sations. Our readers have had opportunities of read-  
ing in these columns some extracts from various papers  
of different shades of politics in which Mr. PALMER's  
guilt was taken as a proved fact and in which he has  
been spoken of as a common felon. They will be able to  
judge for themselves, now that the truth of the matter is  
known, how far he will be justified in appealing to the  
law for redress. We trust that in any case the Govern-  
ment will take his case into consideration, and that, as  
some compensation for the great wrong he has suffered,  
he will be reinstated in his position.

It is extremely to be regretted that the real offender  
is beyond the reach of justice, as the infliction of a severe  
punishment would have had a most salutary effect in  
checking the practice of letter-stealing—of which we  
had more than one example of late, and which, owing to  
the leniency of the authorities, appears to be steadily  
gaining ground. With admirable, but deplorable, pru-  
dence, Mr. BOYES took the precaution of placing the  
frontier between himself and the law he had outraged,  
before sending in his confession. As he naively puts  
it, he had not "the slightest intention of becoming a  
martyr to political meddling"—a highly euphemistic  
way of expressing the nature of the consequences to  
which he would have exposed himself by remaining in  
the country. He seems, however, to have cared very  
little about exposing others to martyrdom, as, though the

letter of confession was written on the 11th of April, he  
held it over for fully six weeks, in the face of the fact  
that M. PALMER was suffering most cruelly from the sus-  
picions of the whole country. As the matter stands, we  
must rest content with small mercies. It behoves us  
to be thankful to Mr. BOYES even for his tardy confession;  
for, notwithstanding the protracted labours of the Post  
Office Commissioners, but little evidence has been ob-  
tained that tended to the elucidation of the mystery.  
Had Mr. BOYES been a more unconscientious man than  
he is, he might without any difficulty have let the matter  
rest, without the slightest fear of detection.

Now that this unfortunate business has been definitely  
settled—happily without any political party incurring  
the odium of so base a transaction—it is to be hoped  
that the party press will see the propriety of abstaining  
from assailing each other with such opprobrious epithets  
as "letter-stealers," "confidence-violators," etc. It is  
by no means an edifying spectacle to see two editors  
sparring away at each other like a pair of moral prize-  
fighters; but when a large number of newspapers des-  
cend to the use of such weapons as gross personality  
and language borrowed from Billingsgate we cry, pity  
the people who sit at the feet of such teachers!

The Session is over, and British Columbia is unpacified.  
Government have been urged time and again to give some  
definite promise to that Province in regard to the Pacific  
Railway, and so late as last Saturday, on the eve of Proro-  
gation, Mr. DE COSMOS pointedly asked if Government in-  
tended to secure the commencement of the construction  
of the Canadian Pacific Railway in British Columbia within  
the year 1874. If so, when? If not, why? Mr. MACKEN-  
ZIE was put upon his mettle, and as pointedly replied that  
the Government had already stated at least half a dozen  
times in the House that the road could not be commenced  
until the surveys were completed. The surveys were not  
yet completed, and the Government could not tell when  
they would be completed. He had no idea that they  
would be completed until the end of this year. Taken in  
connection with the PREMIER's known views, as manfully  
stated by him in his speech on the Pacific Railway, this  
reply to Mr. DE COSMOS simply means that there will be  
no attempt to do anything with the railway in British Co-  
lumbia during the present year. This must be set down  
as a matter of sincere regret, for, rightfully or wrongfully,  
British Columbia will resent the delay, thus accompanied  
by mere technical explanations, and relieved by no hearty  
expression of hope on the part of the authorities. As has  
been stated more than once in these columns, the hold of  
the Pacific Province on the Dominion is a slender one  
and there is every reason to apprehend, both from the  
tone of its local press and the attitude of its representa-  
tives in Parliament, that the bonds of its union will be  
still further strained. It is clear from present appear-  
ances that there will be no continuous railway connection  
with British Columbia for the next fifteen or twenty years,  
and unfortunately we have no idea that the Province will  
patiently wait that long.

Hon. WILLIAM ROSS, Minister of Militia, has emphatically  
denied the authorship of the extremely damaging letter,  
published in another column of this issue. Under ordi-  
nary circumstances this denial would be deemed sufficient,  
but in view of the fact that the Opposition persist in  
maintaining the authenticity of the letter, and in con-  
sideration of the still more important fact that the present  
Government are under the most stringent bonds to main-  
tain an almost virgin purity in all their dealings, Mr.  
ROSS ought to take further steps to disculpate himself  
entirely and beyond any shadow of suspicion. It will  
never do that there should remain a tinge of doubt about  
this matter in the public mind. An inquiry of some sort  
must be instituted, the whole charge must be sifted to  
the bottom, and the result published throughout the  
country. It is a sad state of things when a gentleman's  
word is not taken as adequate guarantee of veracity, but  
the Ministers in power cannot well complain of this, inas-  
much as their friends persistently refused to credit simi-  
lar denials on the part of their adversaries. One bad  
practice leads to another, and both parties imitate each  
other in wrong-doing. Thus, SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD,  
who has suffered more than any other by the publication  
of his correspondence, followed the detestable practice  
of his opponents by sending Mr. ROSS' letter to the papers.  
We shall be mistaken if this petty enforcement of the  
*lex talionis* does not go a great way towards lessening the  
sympathy which honourable men of all parties extended  
to SIR JOHN when he was the victim of this ignoble war-  
fare. The fact of the alleged ROSS letter being a public  
document might be an extenuation for other men, but  
not for a gentleman in the exalted position of SIR JOHN  
A. MACDONALD.