

Trial by Jury in Montreal.

To the Editor of the Guardian:

Dear Sir:—In your last Saturday's issue there appeared as a prominent news feature a despatch introduced to your readers in the following terms: "Trial by Jury a Farce in Montreal. The Montreal Courts are notable for some extraordinary verdicts by French-Canadian juries. During the present week there have been two examples of the idea that British law and French-Canadian reasoning do not reconcile." The despatch in question goes on in the narrowest and most insinuating style to say that a young man named Lemieux, who had been tried for assault on a member of the notorious Emancipation Lodge from whom he took certain Masonic documents, had just been acquitted by a French-Canadian jury although he admitted having perpetrated the crime.

That this verdict was contrary to the evidence adduced at the trial I admit, and it is not my purpose to defend it. Still anyone who looks at the circumstances in which the assault was committed, and at the fact that by reason of it the city of Montreal and every Catholic in Canada narrowly escaped one of the vilest scandals ever attempted, will surely allow that a French-Canadian or any other jury could believe itself justified in delivering a verdict not in harmony with the views of the judge; that the rash act of an over-zealous young man in resorting to illegal means to expose the plot should not be severely punished. And add to this the fact that the "victim" was the Secretary of this infamous association and that not many years ago he himself incurred the sentence of the law for having over a forged signature accused the Oblates of setting fire to the University of Ottawa.

All this, I know, will not excuse theft. British law which the French-Canadian values as highly as any other Canadian, cares little for motives or what sometimes appeals to the average man as an extenuating circumstance, but why French-Canadian juries should be singled out for the pharisaic ridicule contained in the despatch referred to is not so clear.

Less than three years ago, I believe, a Protestant shot a Catholic in cold blood in Prince Edward Island. By some peculiar process of manipulation he was tried before two juries on which no Catholic was given a seat. The first disagreed and the second acquitted the accused—a result which provoked the

scorn of the press throughout Canada and the United States. But perhaps British law and Prince Edward Island reasoning "do not reconcile." "Certainly"—said the St John Globe of June 23, 1908,—“we cannot afford to make any reflection on justice in New York when the Doherty case is remembered;” nor, I might add, can you afford to make reflections on justice in the Province of Quebec

It is an old saying that “people living in glass houses should not throw stones” and I am not aware of any class in this country who can indulge in this pastime without some inconvenience to themselves. We have faults in Quebec as in any other part of Canada. French-Canadian juries may occasionally deliver a verdict founded rather on impulse than on evidence but in this respect they differ little from their Anglo-Canadian brothers. The people of Quebec have so often had the finger of derision pointed at them from the other Provinces of Canada that they are now to some extent used to it, but I feel that I can assure you Mr. Editor that British justice does not suffer most in the Province to which I belong, and as for British “fair play” we shall soon have a monopoly of it—

I thank you in advance for the space this letter will occupy in your valued paper.

L. D. Durand.

April 3rd, 1911.

(This letter has not yet appeared in the Guardian.)



Esperanto

The project of establishing an international language has passed the stage of discussion. Esperantists do not intend their language to displace those already in existence, but to supply a secondary means of communication for those who speak different tongues, and its commercial value is already beginning to appeal strongly to American firms.

All the large New York houses keep salesmen who speak Esperanto, and each week increases the number of wholesale exporters who utilize Esperanto in their foreign correspondence

It is a medium of communication of very great utility to scientists, educators and missionaries. Scientists who desire to know the latest experiments made throughout the world require a knowledge of diverse languages, but if scientific reports are written in Esperanto they experience very little difficulty.