

Certainly Mr. Chamberlain never made a worse mistake than when with real or affected indifference he sought to ignore the speech, as if the Government had put up to him some one too unequally matched to be worthy of notice. Canadians who have followed Mr. Blake's career differ widely in opinion in regard to the merits of the cause he has now espoused, but none of them can have any doubt as to the fitness of that massive, subtle and well trained intellect to cope with any other even in the British Commons, with scarcely an exception, save possibly that of the unique "old man" himself.

### AN INCONSEQUENTIAL DEBATE.

In a paragraph upon those clauses of Sec. 93 of the B. N. A. Act, which have risen to such importance in connection with the Manitoba School question, we ventured to express the opinion that they constituted a peculiar and puzzling bit of legislation, and that they bore internal evidence of having been added to the Act as an afterthought. Both this opinion and this guess have now been to a certain extent confirmed by so good an authority as the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Laurier, further, in his speech on Mr. Tarte's motion, gave us some light on the history of the clauses. They were introduced, it appears, while the Act was being put into final shape for the British Parliament, for the protection of the Protestant minority in Quebec, and afterwards very properly extended to include all minorities, in all the original Provinces. Whether their provisions, whatever they may mean, can now be invoked for the benefit of the minority in Manitoba, is one of the points upon which the authorities do not seem to be agreed some apparently inferring, certainly not without plausibility, that the insertion of another clause touching the same subject, in different terms, in the Manitoba Act, manifestly implies that such clause was intended to take the place of those in question in the B. N. A. Act; others the right of the new Province to fall back upon the provisions of the original Act, as applying in principle to all the provinces. Mr. Ewart, in his letter in our columns, stated, it will be remembered, that the claim of Manitoba is based mainly upon the sentences which he quoted from the Provincial Act, and seemed glad that an escape was thereby provided from the bewilderment which might result from an attempt to interpret the conditions attached to the subsections referred to, in the B. N. A. Act. Dr. Weldon, too, in reply to a question in Parliament, is reported as having expressed the opinion that the provisions of the Manitoba Act are wider than those of the B. N. A. Act. On the other hand, in view of the judgment of the Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council, it is difficult to discover a shadow of ground exists for the claim that a

right of the Roman Catholic minority in Manitoba has been infringed upon, apart from the "or is thereafter established by the Legislature of the Province," of the B. N. A. Act. This is, however, we suppose, one of the points upon which the Supreme Court will be asked to pronounce. No light was thrown upon it in the debate.

The want of logical sequence between Mr. Tarte's speech and the motion for which it served as introduction was so clearly shewn in subsequent speeches, and has been so fully exhibited in the press that it is unnecessary to do more than allude to it. That was certainly a cunningly devised motion which could enlist in its support those who approach the main question from points so far apart and by routes so widely divergent, as those of its mover and Mr. McCarthy. The majority, of course, refused to convict the Government of attempting to evade responsibility in the manner charged. This they may have been justified in doing, in the light of the Premier's distinct and emphatic denial of any such attempt or intention. As to the delay, there is a good deal to be said in favour of procrastination in a case in which the religious and race feelings are so strong, as such passions need time to cool. But, on the other hand, the charge of evasion of responsibility seems to have been so clearly made out from the language used in the report of the Sub-Committee of the Privy Council, from the speeches of various ministers of the crown, and, above all, from Sir John Thompson's own declared conviction that all concerned would respect the decision of the Supreme Court, that it is almost as hard to reconcile those expressions with the protestations of Sir John and others, as to determine the application of the constitutional statutes in the case of Manitoba. The Premier's implication that the decision of the Supreme Court would settle the question at issue, was severely, perhaps fittingly, rebuked by Mr. Laurier. It is clear that should the verdict of the Court affirm the right of the Government to entertain the appeal, scarcely a step towards settlement would have been gained and there would be nothing for anyone to submit to but the determination of the Government to proceed with the consideration of the case on its merits. On the other hand, even should the Court declare that the appeal does not lie, the Government cannot consistently ask the appellants to accept the decision and let the matter rest there. On the contrary it will be in a manner bound by its own precedent to prosecute an appeal on behalf of the minority to the Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council.

The one argument of the debate which was most conclusive was, probably, that in reply to Dr. Weldon's reasoning, based on the supposed analogy of the Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council, in support of the proposition that the Govern-

ment may exercise judicial functions separate and distinct from those coming within the range of its executive responsibility. On closer examination the supposed analogy seems to have utterly failed.

We have more than once attempted to make clear that the gist of the whole matter, in the Manitoba question, is wrapped up in the assumption that the Public schools of Manitoba, as established by the Act of 1890, are Protestant schools, to all intents and purposes, in the same sense in which the Separate Schools were Catholic schools. By far the most valuable contribution to the whole debate was, in our opinion, the passage in Mr. Laurier's speech in which he insisted with great force and clearness that this is really the root of the whole dispute. Once it was established by the judgment of the Judicial Committee that the Roman Catholic minority in Manitoba have no constitutional right to Separate schools, this becomes the one question to be further considered. Whatever may be the meaning of the law in respect to the power of the Federal authorities to enact remedial legislation, it is clear that the exercise of such a power would be tolerated only in cases of extreme hardship. We must all agree with Mr. Laurier that to compel Roman Catholics to pay taxes for and to send their children to schools which were either avowedly or virtually Protestant schools, would be such a case. Every fair-minded man would admit at once that if any provision for remedial legislation existed in the Constitution, this would be the time for its exercise. We could have wished that Mr. Laurier had given his own opinion upon the point, so far as the Manitoba school system is concerned, but from the party point of view he was, perhaps, justified in throwing the onus upon the Government. The wonder is that so little, we might almost say nothing, has hitherto been said in regard to what is so obviously the crucial test of the Manitoba School Bill.

### ULSTER AND HOME RULE.

We are not so sanguine as we should like to be that Home-Rule will prove a panacea for the ills of unhappy Ireland, but if we thought that any good end could be served by entering into an argument to prove that simple justice to the majority of her population demands some radical change in her present system of government, we could scarcely desire a better ground for such an argument than is to be found within the four corners of "Ulster's" letter, which we publish this week. Take, for instance, "Ulster's" description of the character and condition of the great majority of the Irish people to-day. What stronger indictment of centuries of English rule could be framed than is presented in that picture? Is there, then, absolutely no hope of better things for the Irish? Are they to be perpetually doomed to the poverty, illiteracy,