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IN numbers and enthusiasm the great Convention held last week in Toronto must have equalled the expectations of its most sanguine promoters. The immediate outcome of the meeting is the organization to be known as the "Equal Rights Association for the Province of Ontario." The elaborate constitution of this Association seems to provide all the machinery necessary for the working of a powerful society. Through its Annual Conventions, its Provincial and District Councils, and its branches, which may be established in every incorporated village, township, town or city in the Province, or in the wards of towns and cities, it bids fair to ramify to almost every hamlet in the land. As to the Association itself, there are two features of its statutes which may be, it seems to us, open to exception on the part of those who hold that all organizations intended either to modify the constitution or reform the politics of the country should be thoroughly representative and completely open to public scrutiny. One of these is the semi-close formation which must result from empowering an executive committee of thirty, elected by the Provincial Council, to add fifteen to its numbers, and also to fill all vacancies which may occur. If, as appears to be the case, the Provincial Council meets only at the call of the Executive Committee, it is evident that the Executive Committee will be the central and controlling power of the Association, and the arrangement affords possibilities of manipulation which will readily suggest themselves to those who may be disposed to fear that the organization may some day degenerate into a political machine. The other possibly objectionable feature referred to is the secrecy of operation which seems to be contemplated in the provision that no visitors shall be admitted to any meeting of a branch except by permission of the presiding officer. One of the weightiest objections urged against the Jesuit Society is that it works in darkness for the accomplishment of political or semi-political ends. To many it would seem well that Protestantism, in organizing to resist Jesuitic aggression, should set its methods as well as its

aims in the strongest possible contrast by having everything done in the broad daylight of publicity. But while we point out these possible objections, we are far from wishing to lay undue stress upon them. Like all other societies formed to promote public ends, the Equal Rights Association must be known by its fruits.

WE pledge ourselves to continue our exertions to procure the disallowance, voidance, or repeal of the Jesuit Estates Act, and to use all constitutional means for securing the full establishment of perfect religious equality before the law among all classes of people throughout the Dominion." In this third resolution the members of the Convention defined in clear and unmistakable terms the objects for which this Equal Rights Association was formed and is to exist. Confining our attention for the moment to the first of the two objects named, we naturally look for the reasons which have led to this aggressive resolve. They are contained in the two resolutions preceding. No one who shares in the conviction declared in those resolutions can hesitate to approve the aim and endorse the pledge. That conviction is that the incorporation of the Jesuits, the passing of the present Estates Act, and the refusal of the House of Commons, by a very large majority, to recommend the disallowance of the latter Act, are proofs of the "controlling influence which Ultramontanism has obtained amongst us;" and that the Act in question is "a flagrant disregard of the sovereign rights of the Queen, and in clear violation of the Supremacy Act," and is "further a violation of the trust under which the said estates were transferred by the Crown to the Provincial Authorities." Clearly, the premises being granted, the conclusion is irresistible. The flaw, if there is one in the chain, may be illustrated by imagining another great convention, composed of another class of thinkers, and including in its membership such well known citizens as Sir John A. Macdonald, Edward Blake, David Mills, etc., met to record its conviction that the Jesuits' Estates Act, being merely an Act disposing of a portion of the funds of a Province for the final settlement of a vexed local question of long standing, and recognizing the Pope only in his capacity as the legal representative and autocratic head of the religious society which was the party of the second part in the dispute, is a matter of purely local concern, affecting in no wise our civil or religious liberties, and could not therefore have been disallowed without a tyrannical infringement upon the Provincial autonomy secured to Quebec, in common with other Provinces, by the constitution. Are we not bound in common candour and charity to believe that such was, and is, the equally honest conviction of at least many of the one hundred and eighty-eight members of Parliament who voted against disallowance, and of many other thoughtful and patriotic citizens who are carefully holding aloof from this movement? From the point of view of such a conviction, to disallow the Act would be to adopt Bassanio's principle, with a variation, and, to do a little right, do a great wrong. We suppose that the Convention, being a gathering of those favourable to a certain policy, could not have been expected to invite those unfriendly to that policy, else it might have added zest to its discussions, as well as material aid in the search for truth and right, had a few able representatives of the views of the one hundred and eighty-eight been invited to the platform.

THE most determined opponent of the Jesuits' Estates Act would hardly deem it worth while to organize a great Provincial or Dominion Association, equipped with all the machinery necessary for permanent work, for the mere end of securing the destruction of that Act. We turn, therefore, at once to seek the broader platform and purposes of the "Equal Rights Association." These are to be found, we presume, in the second part of the resolution above quoted, as defined and amplified in the fourth resolution. To secure "the full establishment of perfect religious equality before the law among all classes of people throughout the Dominion;" to bring it about that "the line between the civil and ecclesiastical authority shall be clearly defined and shall be respected in all Legislatures and Administrations, both of the Dominion and of the

several provinces thereof"—these are objects worthy of the best energies of all patriotic citizens, working through the most effective organizations that can be devised. Many whose thoughts may now for the first time have been seriously directed to the matter will be astonished to perceive how much remains to be done in Canada before this ideal perfection of a modern free State can be reached. There are the Separate Schools of Ontario and Manitoba to be abolished. There is the State-churchism which lingers in the tithe system and the parochial arrangements of Quebec to be swept away. There is the whole constitution of the Public Schools of Quebec, which are now virtually training schools for the Catholic Church, to be remodelled—the abolition of the Protestant Separate Schools being, of course, involved—on an unsectarian basis. There is the complete secularization of the Public Schools of Ontario to be effected. There is the time-honoured custom of ecclesiastical tax exemptions all over the Dominion to be done away with. The undertaking is a great and good one. Is the work to be boldly and impartially faced, in all its details? It is to be undertaken by "constitutional means." What are constitutional means, and is there the slightest shadow of ground for hoping that they can ever prove sufficient? This Convention has laid down a grand principle. It has adopted a radical if not revolutionary programme. Is the Equal Rights Association prepared to follow out the programme to the end without fear or favour? Can it do so without violation of vested rights and solemn constitutional compacts? And if not, are such rights and compacts valid and morally binding through all generations?

EVERY ratepayer should be deemed a supporter of the Public Schools unless he himself of his own free will, signifies his desire to be marked as a supporter of Separate Schools." This principle laid down by the Convention is, it seems to us, unquestionably sound, as we tried to show last week, and the School Act should certainly be so amended as to be explicit on this point. It is equally clear that every teacher in a Public School should "be able to use the English language efficiently in imparting instruction," and that "no text-books should be used except those authorized by the Department of Education." But we are by no means convinced that the first proposition of the fifth resolution, viz.: that English should be the language, if by this is meant the sole language, of instruction in all the Public Schools of the Province, is equally valid. Such a change is clearly for the present quite impracticable and must be so for years to come. We are strongly inclined to think that a bi-lingual system, at least in the first years of the course, would be more just and fair as well as more feasible. That it, by its conciliatory effect, would in the long run be more effective in promoting the end in view, can scarcely, we think, admit of doubt.

ONE most important result of the Convention may be pretty confidently foretold. It points to a breaking-up, more or less complete, of the existing parties in Dominion and Provincial politics. We wish it were equally certain that it would give the death-blow to the party system itself. Could it bring it to pass that henceforth in Canadian politics men and measures would be judged solely on their merits by electors and legislators, it would indeed bring a great boon to the country. But the mere substitution of a party division on a new line, especially if that meant the substitution of a religious for a political plane of cleavage, would be, to say the least, a doubtful good. It is to be feared that in such a case the last state of the country would be worse than the first. The fact, however, that so large a number of the thoughtful and influential men of the country hold aloof from the present movement, affords some guarantee that no such result can follow. Apart from any such cause for apprehension, any agitation which has the effect of shaking the electors of the country, so to speak, together in the mass, and re-arranging them on the basis of some new and living principle, instead of the old and mostly dead issues on which they have been so long accustomed to divide, can scarcely fail to be productive of good. That the present agitation is having this effect has for some time past been evident, and the formal pledge of the members of the Convention, that in the exercise of the