

who were confident of victory, forty-eight of the sixty-five districts in Quebec declared for Wilfrid Laurier. It was a verdict far more damaging to the Church than any number of decisions by the courts. Its meaning was unmistakable: spiritual weapons had lost their edge through over-use. Subsequent elections have shown that the lesson was not lost upon the clergy.

The significance of the victory was well understood by the Liberal press. French newspapers indulged in comments which they would not dare to utter to-day. Said *La Patrie*:* "A great part of the clergy combated the Liberal party from the first to the last minute, and not only combated it, but also denounced it in letters, sermons, etc. Mgr. Laflèche, from the murky depths of Three Rivers, tried to make Catholics believe that it would be a mortal sin to vote for an honest man like Laurier; Mgr. Lahrecque, Mgr. Bégin, Mgr. Duhamel, Mgr. Cameron and other bishops tried each in his fashion to crush our friends; a great number of the curés and vicars threw themselves blindly into the struggle without respect for the pulpit and without respect for their cloth; and they tried to paint vividly the pitch-forks of Satan and the flames of Gehenna to the electors who would vote against Tupper, Haggart and others. . . . They wished to impose on us ideas which were retrograde and outrageous to healthy reason; they wished to lead us back to the Middle Ages, to lead us as poor heasts of burden; but, God be thanked, the good sense of the people asserted itself in all its pride to say to those who believe themselves masters that the Creator gave intelligence to man in order that he might use it. The grand and inspiring victory of yesterday is one of common sense, of freedom of opinion, of eternal reason, of tolerance, of fraternity. The clergy underwent yesterday a more crushing defeat than the Conservative party itself in the Province of Quebec. To-day, for the first time, . . . they must behold in the splendid rays of the sun of St. Jean Baptiste day their ancient and immeasurable influence gone down in the general wreck."

An English paper, *The Daily Witness*, said:† "The ovation given last night to Mr. Laurier on the Champ de Mars was the greatest expression of political sentiment

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†(Montreal). 24 June, 1896.