

remonstrances to Russia. Russia asked them to formulate the principal points of the policy which they required her to follow with regard to Poland. These three nations formulated, after having consulted between themselves, six points, and one of the six points of policy which they recommended Russia to adopt towards Poland, in the embarrassing circumstances in which she found herself, and not later than the year 1863, was the use of the Polish language in the public offices and in the courts. Such was the advice given by England, France and Austria to Russia, interfering in her conduct towards her subjects, which had passed under her yoke by proceedings which we cannot recall without condemnation, but which had bound her, and she had become, so to speak, her property, a long time previously. After this lapse of time the recommendation conveyed a retrograde step in the policy of Russia in restoring to the Poles their language, which had been abolished, and in giving them the right to attend before the courts and in the public offices."

In connection with this same question, what did we do ourselves, in 1877, thanks to the generous initiative of our hon. friend the member for St. Boniface, who had the advantage of the cordial and great influence of members of the Government then in this Chamber? The following I take from the Senate *Debates*, page 437, Session of 1877:—

"On the 10th clause, Hon. Mr. Girard moved to amend the clause by inserting the following provision:— Either the English or the French language may be used by any person in the debates of the said Council, and both those languages shall be used in the records and journals of the said Council, and the ordinances of the said Council shall be printed in both those languages and in the proceedings before the courts.

"The amendment was agreed to."

It is now thirteen years since that law was enacted, since we proclaimed a toleration which has injured no one, and which has been an act of justice to many; which annually costs only a nominal sum, about \$400, an amount which an hon. Minister offered himself to pay out of his own funds, in order that the argument of economy might not be invoked; yet here to-day we are asked to strip ourselves of a right that we possess. It has been said that a compromise was effected between the leaders on both sides in the other Chamber, but I do not know how that can be brought up here, or that we would like to be bound by such an understanding, whatever it may be. We are asked to give up an acquired right, and to refer to the Territories the decision of that question by an appeal to a people of whom a majority speak a language foreign to ours, and who are doubly fanatical towards anyone the least inclined to give us any hope that we will regain our rights. We could not and we ought not to consent to that. Besides, why have two weights and two measures? Was not

an appeal to the people refused in the case of Confederation; yet we are about to accord it to-day for the purpose of destroying the generous concession contained in the Act of 1877.

We all wish to promote the colonization of the immense Territories of western Canada. Is it by ostracism or by liberality that we will arrive soonest at that end? Each year we see an exodus of the different populations of the civilized globe moving towards these vast regions, thanks to the liberality already mentioned, and the liberty which these immigrants hope to find there, and that a wise law has decreed. Will it not be a breach of plighted faith to the French population, above all others, who go there to settle? Have not I, who possess the advantage of communicating to you in my mother tongue the observations which I would find it much more difficult to express in a strange language, a thousand reasons to congratulate myself on this right? Why should a Frenchman, who may be elected a representative in the Territories, and who may not possess a knowledge of English, not possess the same right of speaking his language, and thus interpret the views and the needs of his constituents? Would it, to act otherwise, be anything less than tyranny? Referring to a question of this kind, a renowned writer has the following:—

"Language is that which has the most singular hold on a people. It is the bond which more strongly unites its members, and the one principal means by which it reveals their character. For these reasons a State should not in the least deprive a nationality of its language, nor prohibit its literature. It is, on the contrary, the duty of the State to give full liberty to a language, and to favor its use, and the general interests of civilization will not in the least suffer thereby. The suppression of the mother tongue of the inhabitants of the Provinces by their own authorities was a terrible abuse of the power of government.

"The English Government committed one of the gravest errors when, in 1873, they wished to impose the laws and the judicial procedure of England in Bengal on the Hindoos, who were not prepared for this change.

"If the moral or intellectual life of a people is attacked by the power of the State, its members are forced to the most determined resistance. Men could not have more just reason for resistance to tyranny than the defence of nationality. Right may suffer in the struggle, but the law remains unchanged.

"A common nationality has rights of a higher order than political attachments, which unite the different races of the same State.

"Article 19 of the Constitution of the Austrian Empire decrees that:—

"All tribes in the state have equal rights, and each one has the inviolable right to preserve its language and its nationality."