

measure, adroitly framed in their interest, was smuggled through in the teeth of such opposition as the Church of Scotland party had time to form against it. The Mowat Act was perfectly explicit in its provisions. It allowed Presbyterian congregations six months in which to decide formally whether or not they should join the Unionist communion. This was to be done by a plebiscite, the rules for which, like Canadian electoral laws in general, were not too stringent to prevent an active minority working up a vote in their own favour. In the event of no vote being taken, it was to be legally assumed that the congregation tacitly assented to its absorption in the union ranks. Most of the Church of Scotland congregations being, from various sources, well endowed, the amalgamation became in practice a dissenting scramble for confiscated property. It is alleged that facilities were afforded by the Act for unionists outside the Church forcing admission, and leaguering themselves with those within for the overthrow of anti-Unionist majorities. Acts not only of sharpness, but of outright violence are said to have been committed in connection with several plebiscites. When the Unionists succeeded no quarter was given to the defeated opposition; when they failed they appealed to the civil magistrate to give them the property of which they had just before been trying to deprive their brethren who differed from them. The Ontarian Courts are full of litigation arising out of the Mowat Act, which was to have caused peace and good-will among Ontario Presbyterians. The Dominion Legislature has been made an indirect party to the conflict by its Act for constituting a local Supreme Court, with a view to debarring appeals to the Privy Council. It is hardly credible, however, that such a stretch of judicial independence should be recognised by the Imperial Government, and the victims of the Mowat law will no doubt, in due time, obtain a hearing from the Judicial Committee at Whitehall.

As a form of disestablishment, this Ontario movement is theoretically and practically interesting. The Provincial Legislature is charged with having acted *ultra vires* in its interference with the property of a religious community which had given no cause of offence to any one. The Church of Scotland, existing in Ontario as a corporation, was under the protection of the law. It possessed rights which nothing had been done to forfeit, or even impair. It is not pretended that the members of the Church, or any considerable portion of them, invited the interference of the Legislature. It would be monstrous to pretend that they coveted the confiscation of their endowments and revenues. Even had there been a portion of the Church led away by Unionist wiles, every particular congregation was entitled to act, in a grave matter of this kind for itself. What the Ontario Legislature had to do first of all was to protect the rights of individual congregations, and,