

### THE TASK OF THE PEACEMAKER.

If we have not already referred to the Hon. Mr. Joly de Lotbiniere's remarkable letter on the Jesuits Estates question, it is because we hesitated to take any share in a discussion which we have hitherto purposely avoided. The unhappy controversy which, passing the bounds of its original platform, raged last year through the entire Dominion, was to us, as to many of our compatriots, a source of sincere regret. We did not think we were likely to add to the edification of our readers by mingling our voice with the chorus of conflict. What was needed was not more noise, but an interval of silence that would give the contestants a chance of asking what it all really meant. There is nothing more easy than to excite a popular clamour. Even where a community is homogeneous in race and creed, design or chance may raise a storm of indignation against some policy, class or interest, which it may require able and patient statesmanship to calm. How much more liable to gusts of popular feeling are populations of a composite character like ours! Here in this fair land Providence has placed side by side the children of two great races—representatives of the three great elements to which the western half of Europe owes its civilization. The nations from which, in different proportions, we derive these elements, are among the greatest in the world. There is no reason why, being thus complex, being able to claim a part in the traditions and literatures of them both, and being a constituent portion of one of them, Canada should not have a destiny worthy of her twofold origin, why each section of our people should not recognize in the other its essential complement, a fruitful source of strength and grandeur and stability. Certain it is that only on the principle of complete oneness, of perfect and willing coöperation, can we expect to build up on this continent a power that will take rank in the van of civilized nations. A house divided against itself, we know on the best authority, cannot endure. Whatever tends, therefore, to create dissension, to set race against race and creed against creed, in this great French-English Dominion is to be condemned by the patriot, and whoever wilfully encourages division, on whatever plea, is guilty of treason to his country.

It must not, of course, be supposed that on great questions of policy it is possible to avoid divergence of view. All progress, all reform involves more or less of political conflict. There are, indeed, theorists who hold that we might do without parties altogether, but no practical substitute has as yet been devised. To give up our traditional party government for a system of random faction under which no ministry could have a year's lease of life would not be a happy exchange. That, in the due course of that constitutional development which has already given us the boon of "responsible government," a time will come when, as the poet sings of the early Roman Republic, none will be for a party, but all will be for the State, it is, at least, permitted to hope. Meanwhile, if it can be shown that, even under our actual dispensation, it is possible to escape the bitterness of those old-world feuds, racial and religious, the revival of which during the past year is a deplorable anachronism, we ought to accept the lesson with gratitude and lose no time in turning it to good account.

The Hon. Mr. Joly has a peculiarly happy vantage-ground from which to address words of counsel and warning to the people of both races

and communions in this province. Representing one of the oldest families of the once dominant nationality, he is at the same time a member of a Protestant church. He is, moreover, qualified by training and experience to speak *ex-cathedra* on the legal and political aspects of the question at issue. While the controversy was at its height, Mr. Joly abstained from meddling with it. Like many patriotic men, who saw that it had been given a direction which could only lead to mischief, he felt that, till the excitement had somewhat quieted down, it would be vain to advise calm deliberation. In the heat of conflict the peacemaker is liable to be misunderstood by both sides. Now, however, that there is a pause—a permanent pause, we trust—in this long warfare of charge and recrimination, Mr. Joly seizes the opportunity of saying a few temperate words to those of his own creed. While he connects the later agitation on the Jesuits Estates Act with the earlier Riel movement, he acquits the *Parti National* of having foreseen the larger and deeper significance which the latter has assumed. But he adds: "If they will put themselves for one moment in the place of the English Protestants of Canada, they will easily understand why it was taken by them as a serious provocation." Nevertheless, neither in the execution of Riel nor in the Jesuits' Estates Bill does Mr. Joly find justification for the appeals made by both sides to religious and national feeling. As to the adverse sentiment that leading Protestants have aroused against the act, Mr. Joly, though he shrinks from accusing them of wilful misinterpretation, or the desire to stir up religious antipathy, is forced to conclude that the result is as deplorable as if they had been blameworthy in both instances. As for the mass of the agitators, he doubts whether they have read the document. At any rate it is evident that it has not been carefully studied by those who use such terms as "endowment" and "confiscation" in dealing with the subject. The property of the Jesuits was not confiscated, he maintains, but escheated to the Crown through the failure of lawful heirs. The Order had committed no offence against the laws of England which would justify such a proceeding. As to the fear, to which some writers and speakers have given expression, lest the payment of the \$400,000 should be but an instalment of a larger sum, Mr. Joly points out that in the statute itself there is an explicit and absolute bar to any further claim. The introduction of the Pope's name in the preamble which gave so much offence to Protestants is by Mr. Joly deemed so essential for the final settlement of the question that, had he been a member of the Legislature at the time of its passage, he would have insisted on its insertion. If in any ordinary contract the sanction of the head of the firm or corporation that is a party to it is requisite to make it legally binding, surely it would have been strange to leave the Pope's name out of a settlement in which the Church was concerned. In fact, what to the lay mind might appear superfluous in the preamble, is, from a legal standpoint, "evidence of the minute precautions taken to secure a valid and final discharge and settlement for the Province of Quebec."

Such in brief is the view that Hon. Mr. Joly takes of this vexed question. We know that different judgments have been pronounced—even by Roman Catholics—of the wording of the bill. His object is not to revive controversy, but to suggest methods of conciliation, and with the spirit of his letter and the desire which animates

him we fully sympathize. "Every effort," as he says, "must be made to preserve the old feeling of mutual trust and forbearance, which has made us Canadians—English and French, Roman Catholics and Protestants—live happily side by side in peace." He feels that the task is not easy; that whoever undertakes it runs the risk of giving offence. We are sure, nevertheless, that there are many who will applaud the mission of the peacemaker. Mr. Joly is not alone in wishing to see the end of this reign of rancorous controversy. Months ago, our correspondent, "W," in his pamphlet already noticed in our columns, preached that conciliation and good will of which his long life has set the example. While both sections of our people have such representatives, we need not despair of the restoration of harmony.

### STANDARDS OF MEASURE.

Again and again it is suggested that illogical, practical England should change her system of weights and measures for the metric system now so largely in use on the continent of Europe. Two main advantages are urged in its favour. It is, we are told, a scientific system, being based on the distance from the pole to the Equator, through the meridian of Paris. Of that quadrant the metre is supposed to be the ten-millionth part. Its advocates claim, therefore, that it is a natural standard, whereas the older systems, having no foundation in geometry, are unscientific. It is also considered a recommendation of the metric system that it is decimal. Republicans ought, moreover, to be well disposed to it, as it is one of the reforms introduced by the French Revolution. The report to the French National Assembly, proposing the new system, was presented on the 17th of March, 1791; the meridian measurements were finished and adopted on the 22nd of June, 1799. After the toleration of a compromise from May 28, 1812, until the end of the year 1839, the metre and its derivatives became the law and usage of France on January 1, 1840, and since then the system has spread over all Europe except Russia and England, and over the most of Latin America, while it is permitted as an alternative in Great Britain and other countries. The expectation largely prevails that it will ultimately be the only system in use. Nevertheless, some communities—backed by men of science and business—obstinately resist the encroachment. In Great Britain a battle has been fought between the metre and the yard for several years and the latter still holds the fortress. The Hon. E. Noel, of the Rifle Brigade, brother of the Earl of Gainsborough, has just published a treatise on "metrology," which is a vigorous defence of the English system, modified on the basis, not of a quadrant, but of a radius or semi-axis of the earth. One result of the change would be to make the acre and the arpent virtually correspond. It would also have some advantages, even from a scientific standpoint over the metric plan, while in convenience—as retaining traditional terms—it would surpass it. Mr. Arthur S. C. Wurtele, C.E., in an able treatise, published in 1882, on "Standard Measures of the United States, Great Britain and France," shows very clearly that, in point of scientific accuracy the yard, metre and toise are on the same level, while, as to nomenclature, the English system has a decided advantage. He earnestly deprecates any change in Great Britain, her colonies and dependencies and in the United States. The question is of very real interest to the industrial, commercial and professional classes.