

The Debate on the Remedial Bill.

THE leaders of the House of Commons at Ottawa have now spoken on the Remedial Bill, and their respective attitudes are now developed. Sir Charles Tupper introduced the Bill, and his argument in its favour was, in brief, this: Confederation was a system of concession and was secured by a guarantee of the rights of minorities. In case of attempted injury to these rights the Dominion was entrusted with the duty of protecting them. On this point Sir Charles remarked that—

"Had not Sir John Macdonald and Hon. George Brown united to put an end to the war of races and religion in old Canada Confederation never would have been accomplished, and no man could say how humiliating might have been the position of Canada. And, moreover, if the guarantee of rights of minorities had not been inserted in the B.N.A. Act at the instance of Sir Alexander Galt Confederation would not have been possible." Sir Charles read the terms of the provision for the protection of minorities whether Catholic or Protestant, the third sub-section of the 93rd section of the B.N.A. Act giving the right of appeal to the Governor-in-Council.

Manitoba was brought into Confederation later on and by an Act subsequent to the British North America Act. By the terms of the Manitoba Act the power of the Local Legislature in educational matters is subject to the power of appeal to the Federal authority. Under this authority, an appeal has been made to the Dominion. And now the Dominion is acting in the line of removing the educational grievances complained of by the minority in Manitoba, the Province itself having refused or neglected for a long time to do so, although duly requested to act in the matter.

Mr. Laurier's answer is not a denial of the right of the Dominion to legislate on due cause shown. He says as yet due cause is not shown and wants further investigation:

"I understand the position taken by the minority in the Province of Manitoba in their petitions to be that they have such a grievance to offer to the people of Canada. They say in their petition that their consciences are outraged and violated. It seems to me that this in the opinion of every man would be held to be one of those violations of heaven's law, unwritten and unchangeable. They say more. They say that compacts were made between them and the Government of Canada, and that a compact was made between the Crown of England and themselves, and that this has been violated, and if a compact to which the Crown was a party was violated, I hold, at all events for my part, that this ought to be held to be one of the violations of heaven's law, unwritten and unchangeable. These are the grievances which the minority of Manitoba have to urge upon this Parliament. How are we to know that they are? How are we to deal with them except by investigation and by inquiry? Sir, we say this is the position that ought to be taken by everybody. This is the position I have taken myself."

Again:

"What I would investigate is precisely what is alleged in the petitions of the Roman Catholic minority, and among the things that are alleged in this petition are these: First, that there was a compact made between them and the Crown of England as represented by the Government of Canada whereby their schools were guaranteed to them; second, that the system of common schools is repugnant to their consciences; third, that the schools established in Manitoba, though nominally public schools, were in reality Protestant schools. These are the things to be investigated. These are the things on which the Roman Catholic minority have all along been resting their claim."

Yet again:

"Here is a bill passed in darkness, passed in ignorance. What evidence have we to-day here on the condition of things in Manitoba? What evidence have we of the different things we should know in order to legislate independently upon such a subject? What is before the House? A half-

hearted and faint measure, a measure of compromise, and nothing else."

Mr. Laurier further says that Manitoba has not been approached in a proper spirit, and that he is confident that if requested in a conciliatory manner the Province would remove the grievance. He therefore demands a commission and his attitude to the Government on the main question is: You on the Government side have not settled and cannot settle this question. [Let me try.] We have elsewhere spoken of his bold defiance of ecclesiastical interference, and although not germane to the subject under debate they deserve reproduction.

"I am here representing not Roman Catholics alone but Protestants as well, and I must give an account of my stewardship to all classes. Here am I, a Roman Catholic of French extraction, entrusted with the confidence of the men who sit around me, with great and important duties under our constitutional system of government. I am here, the acknowledged leader of that great party, composed of Roman Catholics and Protestants as well, in which Protestants must be in the majority, as in every party. Am I to be told—I, occupying such a position—that I am to be dictated to as to the course I am to take in this House by reasons that can appeal to the consciences of my fellow-Catholic members, but which do not appeal as well to the consciences of my Protestant colleagues? No! So long as I have a seat in this House, so long as I occupy the position I do now, whenever it shall become my duty to take a stand upon any question whatever, that stand I will take, not from the point of view of Roman Catholicism, not from the point of view of Protestantism, but from a point of view which can appeal to the consciences of all men, irrespective of their faith; from the point of view of men who love justice, freedom, and toleration.

Mr. Laurier then moved, for the reasons stated above, the six months' hoist.

Our impression is that the Bill will carry but with a suspensory clause either that the Bill is not to take effect for a definite period or only on proclamation thereby giving Manitoba a chance to act in the direction of removing the grievances concerning which the Roman Catholic clergy make such complaint.

We regret that space forbids an analysis of other speeches on the Bill, notably that of Mr. Dickey, whose discourse was a remarkably able and candid statement of the Government's position, and should be carefully read.

The Maple Leaf as the Canadian Emblem.*

THE "Flag question" engaged the attention of our sires in 1807. On one side the idea was expressed of having a Canadian flag, and on the other hand it was held that that of England should suffice us, just as the one of the mother country had sufficed us under the French government. A militia poet writes:

To our brave militia,
Although it wants for flags,
Justice shall be rendered
When its deeds are admired.
Yankees, Ostrogoths, Vandals
Shall face your shots.
You, cannibals, shall feel
Whether death has any charms!

The piece ends with these two prophetic lines:

Yes, proud English, do not doubt it,
To conquer, you shall have our arms!

That was foretelling Chateauguay six years in advance. Not bad for a poet cutting his teeth.

In the *Canadien* of 26th November, 1806, we find an indication of the choice which the Canadians had already made of the maple as the national tree. It occurs in reply to some Francophobe attacks of the *Mercury*:

*From the *Histoire des Canadiens-Français*, 1608-1880, by Benjamin Sulte. Vol. III., chapter 9, page 132. Translated by Colin Campbell.