

THE WEEK.

Seventh Year.
Vol. VII. No. 12.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21st, 1890.

\$3.00 per Annum
Single Copies, 10 Cents.

THE WEEK :

AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS, LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND ART

TERMS:—One year, \$3.00; eight months, \$2.00; four months, \$1.50. Subscriptions payable in advance.

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Subscribers in Great Britain and Ireland supplied, postage prepaid, on terms following:—One year, 12s. stg.; half-year, 6s. stg. Remittances by P. O. order or draft should be made payable and addressed to the Publisher.

No advertisements charged less than five lines. Address—T. R. CLOUGHER, Business Manager, 5 Jordan Street, Toronto.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

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AT the date of this writing the debate on Mr. McCarthy's Bill to abolish the use of the French language in the Northwest Assembly is still going on in the Commons. If the real object of Mr. McCarthy and his friends is to relieve the people of the Territories from a burden which should never have been placed upon them, nothing could more forcibly illustrate the unwisdom of the preamble which he prefixed to his motion and the speech with which he introduced it than the character and range of the debate which it has provoked. As we have before said, had the motion been simply to repeal the clause of the Northwest Act in question, on the ground that the dual language arrangement is unnecessary, in view of the absence of French representatives in the Northwest Assembly, and the smallness of the French population in the Territories, it is very difficult to see on what grounds serious objection could have been raised. The best of the argument would certainly have been had by supporters of the motion. Instead of moving in this simple, practical way, Mr. McCarthy chose—for it is incredible that he could have failed to foresee the result—to lay down a proposition so sweeping and to support it by a speech so aggressive in its bearing upon the rights secured to French Canadians under the constitution, that no member could vote for his Bill without committing himself to a doctrine which is opposed to the teachings of history and the practice of statesmen, and which would almost certainly, were it to be adopted and an attempt made to enforce it by the Parliament of Canada, lead to civil war, or the disintegration of the Dominion. We await with some curiosity Mr. McCarthy's reply to the long array of abstract reasonings, of historical precedents, and of arguments drawn from a consideration of what is just or expedient, which confront him in many solid columns. Will he maintain his original position and essay to lead the famous thirteen or other small band in a hopeless tilt against constitutional wind-mills, or will he maintain that his argument and purpose have been misconceived and misrepresented? It is noteworthy that Mr. Charlton, except in a few injudicious sentences, did not plant himself upon Mr. McCarthy's lofty platform, but contented himself with arguing the question on lower and more practical grounds.

SEVERAL of the elaborate speeches that have been made in the course of the present debate dealt with the question mainly from the historical point of view. Such were in particular those of Mr. Mulock and Mr. Mills. They were interesting and able. They showed the results of a good deal of historical research and were, within the restricted sphere of which the case admitted, monuments of industry and dialectical skill. But *cui bono*? The reader may praise them as parliamentary efforts, but they settle nothing as to the practical question in hand. They show us no convincing parallelism, because there is none to show. The Canadian question is to a considerable extent *sui generis*. Even could they make it clear that some modern nation, at some period of its history, had found itself confronted with a question very similar to that which the Canada of to-day or rather the Canada that is to be, has to deal, and could they show that that nation had solved that question in a certain way, and with a certain measure of success, all that would not prove that the solution of the problem thus reached was absolutely the best, much less the best for Canada to-day, or Canada at the end of the nineteenth or the beginning of the twentieth century. The same is true, with stronger reason, of the attempted parallels, still less close and satisfactory, which formed in part the staple of Mr. McCarthy's speech. As to the rest of that speech, assume that he had made good his main point, by proving his preamble and showing that community in language is an essential condition, a *sine qua non*, of Canadian unity, whither would the conclusion lead us? Simply to pessimism, to despair, so far as our dreams of Canadian nationality are concerned. The French are here. They stand to the English-speaking citizens in the proportion of twenty to fifty, with the advantage that the twenty are near each other and ready to be compacted into a solid phalanx at the first alarm, while the fifty are scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific. What could be more absurd than to suppose that the fifty English should be able, at the word of command, to reconstruct the twenty French, metamorphosing them into Englishmen so thoroughly as to make a homogeneous unity out of the heterogeneous duality? The absurdity seems still greater if we consider the means by which it is proposed to work this wonderful transformation. What are those means? Simply forbidding the use of the French language in Parliament, and refusing to print the public bills and proceedings in that language. We cannot for a moment suppose Mr. McCarthy capable of conceiving the absurdity, or countenancing even in thought the tyranny, of forbidding the French to use their own language in their own families, and churches and public meetings, or even in their own municipal councils and courts. We think, in fact, that Mr. McCarthy has good reason to complain that much of the eloquence of his critics, particularly Mr. Blake, Mr. Laurier and Sir John A. Macdonald seemed to be based upon an assumption so ridiculous, whatever colour some portions of his argument may have seemed to lend to that assumption.

"HISTORY clearly proves," said Dr. Weldon, "that the strength of nations is on the side of homogeneity." And history, we might add, is not necessary to prove it. Common sense declares it. That does not, however, disprove, what the history of nations also demonstrates, that homogeneity is not indispensable to national strength. But all this is, as we have said, aside from the practical question. Canada has not homogeneity, she probably never can have it, at least not for a long time to come. Certainly, too, she cannot get it by the simple process of discontinuing the public use of the French language. A duality of races is a condition of the problem set before her. The task of her statesmen is to make a strong nation out of the material thus furnished her, not of her choice, but by those past events which no power in the universe can now change. It is so clear that it is hard to see how anyone can doubt it, that if this task is ever accomplished it must be done on a basis of mutual justice, having regard to the natural rights of the weaker as well as the stronger, and tempered on each side with forbearance, moderation, generosity. This was admirably shown by Mr. Laurier, in what, however we may dissent from some portions of it, was in some respects the broadest as it was the most

eloquent speech of the debate. If the discussion settles nothing else, it will, we think, have settled that the right of the French-Canadians to the use of their own language in the Province of Quebec and in the Dominion Parliament, and to have the Acts and proceedings of Parliament, and the laws to which they are subject, printed in their own language, is indefeasible, so long as they with one voice demand it. It is a right founded in natural justice as well as on constitutional compact.

BUT all this is aside from the main motion. It is, as we have said, a peculiarity of this great debate that the motion from which it arises is so relatively insignificant that it was with difficulty kept in sight throughout the course of the discussion. Up to the time of this writing, three modes of dealing with the matter at issue have been proposed. There is the plan of the motion itself, which is in effect to discontinue the official use of French in the North-West Territories, at once and peremptorily, by the sovereign Act of the Dominion Parliament. This proposal is foredoomed to failure, as we have seen, by reason of the preamble to which it is attached. Many would doubtless vote for the motion by itself who will not vote for it with its prefix. A point was sought to be made by certain of the speakers by reference to the preamble of the Jesuits' Estates Bill, which was treated as of no importance by some who now object most strongly to this Bill on account of its preamble. But those who thus argue overlook the clear distinction that, while the preamble to the Jesuits' Estates Bill was a mere recital, that now in question affirms a sweeping principle. Another objection to the McCarthy motion, strong enough to condemn it in the eyes of many, is its disregard of the principle of local autonomy in local affairs. At the opposite extreme stands Mr. Beausoleil's proposal to affirm the permanence of the dual arrangement—a proposal which was condemned, not only by the Premier and Mr. Blake, but even by Mr. Laurier. The third and intermediate course, and that which is pretty sure to be adopted in some form, is that which recognizes the right of the people of the North-West to settle the question for themselves, either after a general election shall have given them an opportunity to pronounce on the matter, or not until the North-West has been carved into provinces supplied with all the machinery of provincial self-government, or at some indefinite period in the future after the present experiment shall have been fully tried. Mr. Blake, strange to say, favoured the latter course, though with all his ability and eloquence he was able to support it only on the demonstrably weak grounds that the dual language system might encourage French immigration, and that the question is not yet urgent. Mr. Laurier attempted, with what success the reader can judge, to save his consistency as an upholder of the Provincial Rights or thoroughly federalistic doctrine, by arguing that the right of local option should be withheld during the territorial period, and conferred only on full-fledged provinces. At present it seems most probable that the view favoured by Sir John A. Macdonald will prevail, though it will, of course, be opposed by the solid French vote. As Sir John, however, virtually invited Mr. Blake to an interchange of views, it is quite possible that a ground of compromise may be found on which the majority of English-speaking members can unite. We shall see.

THE Bill introduced by Mr. Hall in the Quebec Legislature, recognizing the holding of the degree of B.A. from one of the Protestant Universities as a sufficient guarantee of qualification for entering upon professional studies, has, we are glad to note, passed both Houses of the Provincial Legislature, and now awaits only the signature of the Lieutenant-Governor to become the law of the Province. We congratulate Mr. Hall, and those who worked with him, on their success in securing this measure of justice. We congratulate them the more heartily because it is not only an act of justice to the Protestant Universities and their graduates, but because it is also in the interests of higher education in the Province of Quebec. The struggle has been a long one, and has been most manfully kept up against great odds and discouragements. We took occasion, in noticing the introduction of the Bill a week or two since, to say that it would put to the test Mr. Mercier's professions of liberalism. We confess that