

legislating on this question, it ought to have been given to the local governments. But divorce was granted in this way because England had established a special tribunal for this matter, and England desired that divorce should be granted in Lower Canada as well as in every other province of British North America. Our Lower Canadian Ministers have simply yielded to the British influence which has been omnipotent in the Convention. (Hear, hear.) They say, "It is very true that the Catholic religion prohibits divorce, but vote in favor of its establishment; for if you do not, the *Rouge* party will return to power and destroy all your religious institutions, if you give them the control of the government of the country." Well, gentlemen upholders of religion, ought you not to use every means to prevent these dreadful *Rouges* from making use of the law, which you yourselves are about to establish, which will enable them to obtain divorce whenever they please, and thus to insult the dogmas and doctrines of the Catholic Church? The Hon. Sol. Gen. East (Hon. Mr. LANGEVIN) gave us, the other night, what he pretended were satisfactory explanations—satisfactory to him, perhaps—on the law of divorce. Well, Mr. SPEAKER, let us examine these wonderful explanations. That hon. gentleman told us that it was simply a law authorizing the declaration that a marriage contracted in any of the confederated provinces, in accordance with the laws of the province in which it was contracted, should be deemed to be valid in Lower Canada in case the husband and wife came to reside there. Well, I ask you, Mr. SPEAKER, if there was any necessity for making this provision in the new Constitution? Would not a marriage, under the present Constitution, contracted under the circumstances referred to by the Hon. Solicitor General for Lower Canada, be as valid as it would be under the Confederation? Certainly it would! Then what do the Government mean? I am well aware that the Catholic members from Lower Canada will not admit it, and I know that they refused to believe me when I made the assertion, but I do not hesitate to repeat it here, that it is the intention of the Convention to legalize civil marriages. The Lower Canadian section of the Ministry has not ventured to admit it, because they well knew that they would draw down upon themselves the disapprobation of the clergy of the country, and of all their fellow-countrymen. If the power con-

ferred on the Federal Legislature in relation to this matter means anything at all, it is that and nothing else, and all the explanations given by the Hon. Solicitor General for Lower Canada and his colleagues are utterly valueless, and cannot be accepted by the Catholic members. Why say that divorce will be permitted? If the existing law authorizes divorce now, it was quite unnecessary to make a new law on the subject, and to make it an article of the new Constitution. The Government takes every means in its power to conceal the real intentions of the Conference on this important point of the scheme, but I am firmly convinced that their object is perfectly understood, and the future will prove whether or not I am mistaken when I assert that it is intended to make civil marriages legal in this country. One of the reasons—and the only one which I have been able to discover—for which the present Government has granted power to the Federal Legislature to decree divorce, is that the Protestants of Lower Canada would never, but for that provision, have given their support to the Confederation measure proposed by our Ministers. I am well aware that there are certain Protestant denominations whose doctrines forbid divorce, but I do not hesitate to say that the only reason of the concession is the one I have just stated. Besides, in the pamphlet of the hon. member for Montmorency, I find a very strong admission:—

Catholic opinion urged that a question of such social importance should be left to the local governments, but let it be understood that in leaving it as regards Lower Canada to a Protestant majority, we only maintain the present condition of that important question. By so referring it to the Federal Government, we avoid many causes of contention and many violent complaints which might eventually be listened to by the Mother Country, where divorce is legalized and operates as a social institution.

Who can say that the Protestants—who are in great majority in our present Parliament, and who will constitute the two-thirds of the Confederation—would ever have consented to localize legislation on the subject of divorce?

The hon. member for Montmorency knows just as well as I do that the Protestants of Lower Canada would not have liked it, and that to obtain their support, it has been said to them, "Oh yes, let us concede that too; we have yielded representation by population, let us also give them divorce and anything else they like."