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THE debate in the Commons a few days since on Mr. Charlton's motion, affirming that the question of the constitutionality of the Jesuits' Estates Act should have been submitted to the Supreme Court of Canada, brought out some curious differences of opinion on the part of the highest authorities in the House touching important constitutional questions. For instance, Sir John Thompson, replying to Mr. Charlton's taunt as to the remarkable similarity between the speech of the Minister of Justice, last session, and the reply of the Governor-General to the deputation which waited upon him, disclaimed all responsibility in the matter and affirmed that he did not know what reply His Excellency was going to make, or had made, until he read it in the newspapers. But Mr. Blake maintained that whatever the Governor-General did must have been done under the advice of the Government, and that, hence, the real responsibility for His Excellency's reply to the deputation rested upon the Government. Surely the Governor-General of Canada ought to know, and the people of Canada ought to know, whether he is at liberty to express any opinion of his own in regard to any political matter. It is pretty clear that in the case in question His Excellency thought that he had a right to speak his own mind, and that those who sent the deputation were of the same opinion. The affair was meaningless else. The reader will perhaps remember a remarkable speech made by Lord Dufferin, on the occasion of his visit to British Columbia during Mr. Mackenzie's premiership—we are not sure whether Mr. Blake was Minister of Justice at the time or not. That speech could hardly be supposed to have been advised by the Government. Internal evidence is all against such a supposition. In fact, in that case, as in the one under discussion, the whole force of the utterance was derived from the assumption that they were the opinions of the Governor-General himself, and not of the Government, which were being expressed. And yet it is obvious that to grant that the representative of the Crown has a right to hold and express personal opinions on political topics would open the way to possible complications of a very grave character. It would be, in fact, dangerous to our much-prized system of Responsible Government to concede his right to act in a double capacity, the official and the unofficial, and to appear in either character at will. Another difference of opinion, involv-

ing consequences no less serious, was brought out in the same debate. Sir John Thompson contended that the Act in question was beyond disallowance from the time when it was pronounced free from objection, or, in other words, was "allowed" by the Government, though that was some time before the period within which disallowance is possible had expired. Mr. Blake maintained, *per contra*, that the Executive of Canada has no right to allow, but only to disallow. It can destroy, but not create. The assent of the Lieutenant-Governor, he contends, makes a provincial measure operative. He applied the *reductio ad absurdum* to the opposite view by pointing out that, if that view prevailed, the Dominion Government could thwart any action that might be proposed by Parliament, or deprive it of the power of expressing its opinion upon the constitutionality of any Act of a local Legislature, by simply allowing it in advance. But is not the argument two-edged? If a Provincial Act is operative from the moment it receives the assent of the Lieutenant-Governor, and any action taken under it valid until the expiry of the year, it would be very easy, apparently, for the Legislatures, in many cases, to thwart the views of the Central Government or parliament, by hastening to put the Act into operation. Evidently there is need of some authoritative decisions in regard to such points.

THE Bill now passing through the Commons to amend the Constitution of the North-West Territories, or, as they are hereafter to be known, the Western Territories of Canada, is, in view of all the questions involved in it and likely to grow out of it, an important measure; and there is good reason to complain of its introduction at so late a period in the session. It must, of course, be borne in mind that it is, as Sir John A. Macdonald explains, a mere patching up of the old Bill, with a view to make it last a few years longer, after which provincial organization, with full responsible government, must supersede it. But this is no good reason why the present arrangement should be made unnecessarily illogical and arbitrary. It is rather an excellent reason for modifying it, as far as practicable, in conformity with the shape which it is hereafter to assume; and thus making it a stepping-stone and a school of practice with reference to the coming system. It is almost impossible to account for the form some of the amendments are made to assume, save on the principle that the Ottawa Government is anxious to retain the largest possible measure of arbitrary power for the longest possible period. When, for instance, it has been determined to give the Territorial Assembly power to deal with the dual language question in so far as its own proceedings and records are concerned, why need so reasonable a concession have been partially spoiled by a reservation as to the publication of the statutes and proceedings in the courts? Even if a semblance of cause may be shown for such limitations, why should any regulations which the Assembly may make in regard to the subject, so far as it is placed within its power, have to be "embodied in a proclamation," and published by the Lieutenant-Governor before they can take effect? Seeing that the present Lieutenant-Governor is the man whose ill-advised zeal for the perpetuation of his own language precipitated the dual language crisis, one could almost fancy the amendment designed to give him power to obstruct the future action of the Assembly in regard to it, and give as much trouble as possible. Again, seeing that the chief conflict between Lieutenant-Governor Royal and the Assembly has arisen out of the reasonable claim of the latter to the control and expenditure of the Territorial funds, what could be more unsatisfactory than to meet this demand by a clause giving the Assembly the right to control the expenditure of "such portions of any moneys appropriated by Parliament for the Territories as the Governor-in-Council may instruct the Lieutenant-Governor to expend, by and with the advice of the Legislative Assembly?" This is paternal government in its essence. Of what use but to increase irritation can it be to make a pretended concession which is no concession at all, but rather a new declaration of absolutism? Late though it is in the session it is to be hoped that no effort will be spared to amend these amendments in their passage through committee, so as to make them at least an earnest of the local self-rule which they are designed to foreshadow.

DURING one of the sittings of the House of Commons in Committee of Supply, a few days since, a very interesting discussion arose in connection with an item to cover the cost of twenty-five copies of Taschereau's "Work on Criminal Laws," for library exchanges. The scope of the discussion was enlarged so as to take in the propriety of encouraging native talent, and the best means of giving such encouragement. Special reference was made to Mr. Kingsford's "History of Canada," which was highly spoken of by those who had read the first volume, and to Mr. Lampman's works, which were admitted to indicate poetical talent of a high order. It seems that the only way in which Government has as yet encouraged native literature is by purchasing a number of copies of works of special merit. This, as Mr. Laurier observed, is not doing very much. As was to be expected, Mr. Davin was particularly eloquent in urging the claims of native talent to substantial recognition. He said of Mr. Kingsford's "History" that it would be a disgrace to Canada if a work so large in conception, so admirably executed, so universally recognized that even the caustic *Saturday Review* was constrained to pronounce it a most valuable contribution to historical knowledge, were not encouraged. Proceeding, Mr. Davin said:

I may say in regard to Lampman, that I have read Lampman's works. The fact is, he is a genuine poet. His utterance is not the mere echo of high poetic culture, he has a genuine song of his own, he has a genuine inspiration of his own; and so far as we can encourage him we ought to encourage him in the interests of Canada, because, you may be sure of this, that the life-blood of a people is its literature, that the life-blood of a people is the genius that is put into books. There is the life-blood from which statesmen and merchants and lawyers and others draw their nutriment, and that is the channel and source of all the power.

Mr. Laurier was not prepared to go so far as to say that "literature is the life blood of the people," but he and most other members of the committee were pretty well agreed that something should be done for the encouragement of native literature, when really meritorious. There are, however, very great difficulties in the way. In the first place, men of talent may naturally be expected to be sensitive and to object to be made recipients of special Government or Parliamentary favours. The days when literary men of the first order could submit to be patronized by either governments or wealthy individuals are, we may hope, past. Then, again, the difficulty, if not impossibility, of laying down any fixed principle to guide in bestowing "encouragement;" the danger of political favouritism being either displayed or suspected; the pressure to which the Government is sure to be subjected by zealous friends, as soon as the fact that "encouragement" may be given at public expense becomes known, are all embarrassing considerations. Still further, who is to be the judge of the merits of different writers, and where is the line to be drawn below which literary merit shall be deemed unworthy of public aid? If first-class talent is accorded substantial recognition, why should not second-class and third-class ability have also its smaller meed of encouragement? All these things tend to complicate the matter and make it doubtful whether it is not better that literary ability should be left, like every other kind of ability, to make its own way, especially as, unlike many other kinds of ability, it has always the world for its field.

AN Ottawa despatch to the *Empire* a few days since represented the feeling on the Ministerial side of the House as being very strongly in favour of a liberal expenditure of money for the purpose of securing a larger share of European immigration. It might have been supposed that the results of previous large expenditures for this purpose would have satisfied all parties. It is very well for the Australian Colonies, separated as they are by thousands of miles of ocean from any competitor, to expend millions in aiding industrious multitudes to reach their shores. But to expend large sums in bringing foreigners to Canada is like putting money into a bag with holes. In spite of all outcries of "pessimism," "want of patriotism," and so forth, there is, we are persuaded, nothing like looking an unpleasant truth fairly in the face, studying its source and size and then setting earnestly about getting rid of it. For this reason we are glad to learn