

testant minority of Quebec would not be satisfied with that, but continued the agitation, in order to obtain something more substantial than the generosity of their fellow-countrymen in the legislature." Sir Geo. Cartier, the French Conservative chief, came to the rescue with a positive pledge in the name of his party, then in the ascendant in the province, that the legislature of Quebec would itself pass the law that the Protestants demanded. This pledge, so far as it went, was accepted by the Protestants. The solemn pledge of a political leader, given in the name of his party, and accepted in good faith by the people to whom it was made, was in those days considered binding, and it was not doubted that it would be honorably fulfilled.

But, when fulfilled, the Protestants would be no safer than before. The legislature that would pass the law they demanded, could at any time repeal or alter that law, and take away the rights that were now to be conferred. How were the Protestants of Quebec to be protected in the enjoyment of these rights for the future? How could it be made sure that they could never be taken away by the legislature that was to grant them? The difficulty, indeed, seemed as far from solution as ever.

Manifestly there was no way of satisfying the objections of the Protestants of Quebec except by a further limitation of the power of the provincial legislature. But could a further violation of the great doctrine of provincial autonomy be permitted? By limiting the power of a legislature so that it could never pass a law prejudicially affecting separate schools existing at the union, this central doctrine of provincial rights had, as regards education at least, been already disfigured almost beyond recognition. If the power of the legislatures was to be further degraded by limiting their authority to repeal, or even to amend their own laws in respect to education, then indeed that doctrine would be mutilated, so that even the "fathers of confederation" would not know it. All that and nothing short of it must be done, however, in order to satisfy the Protestants of Quebec. Provincial autonomy must never be allowed to stand as against the maintenance of their rights and privileges. And who will aver that the position taken by the minority of Quebec was not a reasonable one?

But how was it to be brought about? Was it really possible, at this

stage, to secure the further limitation of provincial powers that the Protestants of Quebec demanded? If anything was to be done it must be done quickly. The delegates of the provinces were even then about to proceed to England to confer with the imperial government to procure its approval of the scheme, and to have an imperial act passed creating the union and defining its constitution, in accordance with the terms of the resolutions. This would indeed be the last opportunity for securing further limitation of provincial powers.

The Quebec minority determined not to lose the opportunity and promptly took action. A petition of the "Association of Protestant Teachers" in the province was forwarded to England, addressed to "Her Most Excellent Majesty," settling forth in strong terms the defects of the then school laws and the grievances that the Protestant minority endured thereunder. The petition set forth that "Her Majesty's subjects professing the Protestant faith" in the province were "subjected to serious disadvantages." Amongst these was "their liability to be taxed for the support of Roman Catholic schools," and "the difficulties they experienced in establishing separate schools for themselves." It stated that the injury complained of "had been the subject of frequent complaint on the part of the Protestant population;" that it "had tended to discourage the settlement of Protestants in the province," that it "had caused many families to leave the country," and yet that "no remedy has hitherto been granted by the legislature" (the old parliament).

The petitioners went on to refer to the proposed union of the provinces, and declared that "under the constitution . . . by which it was proposed that education should be under the control of the local legislatures, the Protestants of Lower Canada became alarmed." They further represented that in order "to allay the feeling thus generally existing, solemn pledges were made by members of the government that the grievances should be redressed before confederation." Solemn pledges were thought to mean something in those days). The petitioners drew Her Majesty's attention to the fact that a measure introduced into parliament to give them redress had been withdrawn, "and unless provisions to this end can be introduced into the Imperial Act of Confederation, your memorialts fear that their educational rights will be left to the control of the majority in the local