

OPTIONAL BALLOT.

Debate concluded.

MR. CLANCY'S SPEECH.

Mr. Clancy, on rising to speak, first expressed his sincere regret for the unfortunate circumstances which had obliged Mr. Fraser to cease speaking. However, he must say that he dissented from the ground that the hon. gentleman had taken. He believed that he was sincere in his opinions, and claimed the same right for himself. He would say at the outset that he personally had no objection to the ballot. He believed that the open vote was the more manly kind, but, on the other hand, would say that if the Roman Catholics of the Province were willing to accept the ballot he would have no objection. To him it was not a question affecting any man's religion; if it did, it would be the duty of every man, Roman Catholic and Protestant alike, to oppose any act of the Legislature which would interfere with the rights of any sect or religion whatever in the country. Mr. Conmee had delivered a speech which had been very profuse, in which he had exhaustively proved that the Roman Catholics were loyal. Had the Roman Catholics of the country come to this, that the hon. gentleman must apologize for them and assert their loyalty? He declined to discuss their loyalty, and did not know why they should be singled out for defence or apology. Mr. Conmee offered a gratuitous insult to the Roman Catholics in trying to defend them from a charge which on that the speaker knew of had made at all, if it was made it came from quarters which should ensure it nothing but contempt. If Mr. Conmee wanted an optional ballot why did he drag in the animosities and hateful things of the past? He could see no harm in Roman Catholics going to the polls and casting their ballots, in their voting in accordance with a principle which had been so long in practice in the Province, and to which no man could be found to object. There was talk of its being forced upon them, and the House had been told that logots were in favor of it. No sane man would, even if bigots also asserted it, deny that two and two make four; no sane man's course should be changed because bigots also held it. The contention that the ballot should be rejected by Roman Catholics because it is given them with ulterior objects Mr. Clancy regarded as far fetched and lame.

Hon. Mr. Fraser—My view of the ballot cannot be disposed of till after my ideas on the constitutional point involved are known. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Clancy, continuing, asked if the Protestants were in a minority in the Province, and if the Roman Catholic majority were to ask the Protestant minority to accept the ballot, would that minority resist it? If the Protestant minority were unable to point to overt acts of the majority, but, nevertheless, suspected the purity of its motives, would it on that ground be likely to refuse the ballot? He was unable to come to any conclusion that it would. If there were a vote under the secrecy of the ballot as to the rights of others there would be good reason to oppose it, but that was not the question. Surely no one would say that the Roman Catholics misuse their ballots. Nor could he see that anyone could point out that the introduction of the ballot would lead to anything further, or would affect the status of the people of the Province, or would impair the efficiency of the Public or Separate Schools. Therefore, when his side of the House suggested that a principle which was not new, but well tried, should be extended to the minority, why should such an outcry be raised? If they were the inventors of the ballot, if it were not in use, if they were trying to give it to the Separate Schools first of all, there would be some ground for objection. But if it was wrong for Roman Catholics, why was it not wrong for Protestants?

Under the constitution, Mr. Clancy went on, certain rights were assured to the minority. Keeping that in view, why should anyone be open to the charge of having hidden motives for voting for the compulsory ballot, while now Mr. Conmee was bringing in a bill for a permissive ballot, thereby giving force to the charge that the Roman Catholic clergy have coerced the laity? The purpose of the ballot was that all men might, in their vote, be free and emancipated from the circumstances of daily life which might influence their votes—from the influence of neighbor and employer as well as clergymen. He could cite cases in Public School open voting where men had been prevented from voting because of the pressure at the polls of neighbors, and he could not see why men should not be free from that. He could not see any difference between voting in Separate School elections and in municipal and legislative elections. So long as human nature existed so long would it be well to allow citizens to vote secure from the inspection of anyone, whether pastor, employer, neighbor, or enemy. There was no reason why Roman Catholics should be less anxious than others for this privilege. He would not say that the clergy were in the habit of coercing their people, but he would say that men in that or in any other similar position would be able to exercise a certain influence if they

wished to do so; and he thought it well to protect all against this species of mild coercion, whether by word or deed. This he thought an answer to that objection.

The charge that the Opposition desired to destroy and cripple the Separate Schools, Mr. Clancy declared to be unfounded. The ballot would not impair their usefulness, and there was no conscientious objection to the principle of secret voting; no one could urge that he would be kept from the polls because of it. Mr. Conmee had dragged in all the old animosities he could, and had tried to make out that the Conservatives were opposed to the Separate Schools and trying to force the ballot upon Roman Catholics. Perhaps three-fourths of the members of the House were opposed to Separate Schools, and only all of the Cabinet. He ventured to say that the Attorney General himself would not establish Separate Schools to-day if he had the power. With such a feeling on his own side of the House it was a clap trap to try to assail the Conservatives as opposed to Separate Schools, and it was done for some end. Though the majority of the House, and likely of the people of Ontario, were opposed to Separate Schools, however, he thought that they would respect their rights and would deal justly by them. The question was a difficult one, and great responsibilities rested upon the man who discussed it; but he thought that the Government were the ones who were responsible, who had excited the feeling of the minority, who told them that they were attacked, and who said that the motion to give them the ballot was made with hidden motives. The Roman Catholics were honestly alarmed, not because anything was in sight, but because they were told that the Conservatives were trying to destroy Separate Schools.

Hon. Mr. Fraser—What would my hon. friend say to the platform of the Orange Grand Lodge? Does he contend that the Orange body is not in favor of the abolition of Separate Schools? Does he not admit that the members of the Orange body are nearly all Conservatives? Will he say the P.P.A. is not intending to abolish Separate Schools? Is it not therefore idle to say that there is no section of the community against Separate Schools?

Mr. Clancy said that he knew nothing of the Orange body; he believed that once the Liberals laid down a platform of opposition to Separate Schools, and Mr. Fraser had stayed the party.

Hon. Mr. Fraser—I was but a lad going to school then. Surely my hon. friend will not say that I was in the Liberal party at that time.

Mr. Clancy said he was not discussing the Conservative party; if it included the Orange men in the ranks, he was glad. But the opposition of the Liberal party to Separate Schools had not ceased until Mr. Fraser became a man.

Hon. Mr. Fraser said that he had never cast a vote nor had anything to do with the Liberal party during that struggle. During his connection with the party there had not been one syllable in favor of abolition of the Separate Schools. Mr. Clancy would not be so free with his challenges were he in a condition to take care of himself.

Mr. Clancy reiterated his statement that the Liberal party had at one time opposed Separate Schools, and that Mr. Fraser had been reared in the cradle of Liberalism.

Mr. Fraser again denied Mr. Clancy's charge.

Mr. Clancy went on to say that the attitude of the Liberal party had not changed, and that the Attorney General would not at present take the responsibility of establishing Separate Schools. It was not the view of the Orange Grand Lodge alone, but of the majority of the Liberal party. Both political parties were opposed to Separate Schools.

Hon. Mr. Fraser said that he did not know of any Liberal prepared to say that he was going in for the abolition of Separate Schools; he did know of thousands of Conservatives who would say that.

Mr. Clancy repeated the opinion that the majority in both parties would like to see the abolition of Separate Schools. While he did not agree with that view, he believed that they were honest in that opinion. If the Roman Catholics have an enemy in the Province it was the Minister of Education, who had alarmed them and made their interest a football, and who, with no sympathy at all with them, was telling them that the Conservatives were trying to deprive them of their rights. The question was not one of religion, and religious issues should not be introduced. If the permissive ballot were adopted the same evils would follow as from the compulsory ballot. The position of the Government with regard to that was untenable. He would have no hesitation in voting against the bill, because it was false in every way, because it was the same half-way measure which had been taken with regard to the Public Schools—a measure designed to let the Government down easy. Mr. Clancy then remarked that trustees elected by open voting would not be likely to declare for the ballot, and, in reply to a question of Mr. Fraser's, declared that he believed in the municipal machinery being used with the ballot for both Public and Separate School elections. He further declared that the bill would prove a dead letter, and concluded by again

declaring that the ballot would interfere with no man's religion.

Messrs. White, Balfour and Clarke spoke on the same subject, and were followed by

MR. MEREDITH,

who said He regretted he was not in condition to do justice to the subject. He would first speak of Mr. Conmee. He said he seemed to have been set up for the special purpose of introducing a heated debate. While he had been talking about the loyalty of Irishmen to their country and so on he had been in his heart at a Donnybrook fair, and had been desirous of nothing so much as of introducing heat into the debate. Mr. Meredith objected in very emphatic terms to the reference Mr. Conmee had made to his attitude in 1893, and to the quotation made from his speech, in which Mr. Conmee had declared Mr. Meredith had urged both parties to unite against Roman Catholics as against "a common enemy." If Mr. Conmee had read what had preceded this remark which he had quoted he would have seen that he was referring in this speech to something that had been written by a very high dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church, which had practically advocated keeping the Roman Catholic vote apart from the two political parties and giving it to whichever party would give most in return for that vote. This position, he maintained then and maintained now, was one in opposition to which all classes of people should unite. He challenged the member for Algoma to say the expressions he had quoted had been used in any other sense than this. Yet the hon. gentleman had dared to make the false charge against him, that when he was calling upon the people to unite against a common enemy he had asked them to unite against the Roman Catholics. While he said that, he still asserted that he was firm in the policy and principles upon which his party went to the polls at the last election. They were defeated then. They were taunted continually with the majority which the Government had secured. So long as he had the power to lead the Opposition he did not care whether he was defeated once, twice or three times so long as he was defeated in standing by the principles in which he believed. If the House is to be guided by the arguments of hon. gentlemen opposite, then it would appear that if a word were uttered touching the Separate Schools one would excite the enmity, hatred and hostility of the Roman Catholic body. It might be necessary, in the interests of these schools and of the Roman Catholics themselves, to make these schools more efficient than they are, and this could only be done through the representatives of the people. Yet if these views were accepted, they would be forbidden from doing so. He wanted to know whether the church or any other body had the right to dictate what changes should be made in the law. He, as a representative of the people, although he did not worship at the same altar as the Commissioner of Public Works, had precisely the same right as that hon. gentleman to discuss the question without being charged with partizanship or hostility to the Roman Catholic Church. Hon. gentlemen opposite charged him with raising these cries for the purpose of helping himself into office. He did not like speaking about himself personally, but he thought his record showed he was not one who had done much for the sake of office. He had sat for twenty odd years in the House, and during that time he had sat to the left of the Speaker. He believed if his ambition had been what was suggested, simply to get into power, that he could have got office, but he would not sacrifice his principles for the sake of getting office. No office in the Dominion would induce him to forswear what he believed to be his duty. The Commissioner of Public Works had said that the fact that Separate School affairs were in evidence was an indication that a general election was at hand. He supposed the idea was to impute to the Opposition the matter of having brought them in evidence. But he would like to know who introduced the first bill on the subject this session and who had made the first inflammatory speech. The House had hardly met before the hon. member for Algoma introduced his bill. If anybody was responsible for having introduced the apple of discord into the debate it was Mr. Conmee. He had been careful not to raise any question in the House relating to this matter, in view of the way in which discussions upon it proceeded. The subject having been introduced, he had moved to make it a real ballot, and not a sham ballot. He was within his rights in doing so surely. He was charged with inconsistency on this question. He did not care whether he was consistent or not, so that he was right to-day. The Attorney General might as well be charged with inconsistency as himself. He had voted against the ballot in 1890 in any form for Separate Schools, and now was prepared to vote for the bill, on the ground that a desire had grown up for it on the part of Roman Catholics. He denied that the Province had ever surrendered the power to control these schools, just as they controlled other schools. Coming down to a practicable question, it seemed to him it would be reasonable, so long as these schools existed, that a fair and reasonable system of text-books should be used in the schools, and that the religion taught

in the schools should be taught apart from the matter in the text-books. He denied there was any constitutional reason why the Separate School Trustees should not be elected by ballot, according to his recent resolution. There was nothing in the advocacy of the ballot that conflicted with the B.N.A. act. He was going to vote against this bill. He believed that instead of settling it it would reopen the question. The day was coming when the ballot must be used for all schools. Why not settle it now by making a law for both classes of schools, settling the question once and for all by declaring the ballot must be used? He had said nothing and would say nothing to hurt the feelings of anybody.

He had no sympathy with attacks upon any religious body, Mr. Meredith said. He believed in Roman Catholics having all the religious rights which Protestants enjoy, and he would withdraw none of their rights. He had no sympathy with attempts to ostracize Roman Catholics from office; he would give the same position to Roman Catholics as to Protestants, but that had not been the practice in the country. He would not give to any man a position to which he was not entitled, and one of the troubles of the country had been that in the formation of the Government sectionalism and sectarianism have had so much influence. It would be a good thing for the country and for civilization if in the administration of the affairs of the country the best men were chosen. These influences of sects and sections were making against the formation of united Canada.

In conclusion, he apologized to the House if his language had been too strong. At the same time he wished to take back nothing, for he felt that he had been unjustly attacked. He had never insulted by revolution or by word any class of citizens, and had never said anything to give offence to any creed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

The Attorney-General said Mr. Meredith had made a very furious speech, and he was sure quite nine-tenths of it had been concerning himself, what he had done, and what he wished to do. He said he could have got into office if he wished to. Well, the hon. gentleman had been in Opposition for twenty years, and was still there. He (the Attorney-General) did not know what he could have done that he had not done to get office. He had not been particular about always taking the same views of things, but still he had been unsuccessful, and he (Sir Oliver, apprehended he would still be unsuccessful at the ensuing elections. The hon. gentleman said he stood by his principles. He (the speaker) did not know what those principles were, and he thought the country did not. They had been changed so often. They had been changed in regard to the very matter that was now under discussion. The Attorney-General read from a speech by Mr. Meredith on the subject of the ballot and Separate Schools, he delivered in 1893, first remarking that the issue now between the two sides of the House was whether the ballot, if introduced into Separate Schools, should apply as in the case of Public Schools, or should be compulsory. Mr. Meredith had then taken the views the Government was now taking on this very matter. This speech in question was made in January 23, 1893, and in that speech Mr. Meredith had stated that it was not desirable that the House should force upon the supporters of the Separate Schools a system of voting distasteful to them (Mr. Meredith—Hear, hear). The Attorney-General said Mr. Meredith took just the opposite position now. The Roman Catholics of the Province were not prepared to adopt the ballot in the way he now wished to compel them to do; but there were some indications that they were willing to accept it in the same way in which it was applied to Public Schools. Mr. Meredith felt in 1893, as the Liberal members of the House felt it now, that the House should not force upon the Roman Catholics a bill that was distasteful to them. But he now desired to compel Roman Catholics to adopt the ballot system. Did he not see how impossible it was to get Roman Catholics to acquiesce in this when the bill was forced upon them from a Protestant standpoint? Mr. Meredith had referred to some difficulties about school elections that had occurred in two places, and that, too, not in every year, but in one year or two years at the utmost. Could the Protestant portion of the community expect that Roman Catholics would adopt the ballot to a greater extent than Public Schools? That they would be willing to adopt the ballot when they are not asking for it? It was the Protestants who were asking for the ballot for Roman Catholics. Those who advocated it said to them: "You are too much in the hands of your clergy; you cannot elect the trustees you wish; you want to give you the ballot for the purpose of freeing you from the influence of your clergy." He was quite sure no Protestant denomination would accept a measure forced upon them in that way. If another denomination were to approach it with the remark, "You are not free; you cannot do what you like. It is necessary that we who are opposed to your religion should interfere to give you the rights you ought to have," what would be the result? Why force the ballot upon the Catholics? He approved of the ballot himself. He thought it was the